ABOUT SOME FELLOWS

BY AN ETON BOY

AUTHOR OF

'A DAY OF MY LIFE'

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ABOUT SOME FELLOWS;

OR,

ODDS AND ENDS FROM MY NOTE-BOOK.

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BY

AN ETON BOY,
AUTHOR OF "A DAY OF MY LIFE AT ETON."

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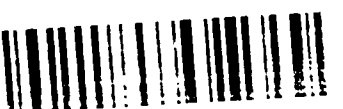
Dedicated to

All who { wish well to / wish ill to / are disinterested in } ETON, in the hope that { it may make them wish better; / it may show them we are no worse than we ought to be; / they may at least be amused, if nothing else.



PREFACE.

HAD I the pen or the time or the talent of a Thackeray, or of a Bulwer Lytton, or any of those great observers of human nature, I might have perhaps woven these casual notes into an interesting complication of character, adventure, and sentiment; but I have none of these articles—nothing but a wretchedly bad quill pen, and an old note-book, and a few odd moments here and there in which to jot down ideas that take my fancy; so that my readers must take all as it comes. Let them read what they please and leave out what they please; there is no particular plot to be damaged, and they are at liberty to draw what moral they like from their reading; of course there must be one, as there is in everything, but I do not wish to tie them down to any in particular.

No more; a book that requires too long a preface is usually soon consigned to the back of the shelf and forgotten; therefore, hoping that this little compilation of my leisure hours will not suffer that fate, I will conclude with the words of one who has gone before me:

"Kind readers, who vouchsafe to cast an eye
On what ensues, lay all prevention by.
Let not my book your indignation raise,
It means no harm, no poison it conveys;
Except in point of laughing it is true
'Twont teach you much; it being all my view
To inspire with mirth the hearts of those that moan,
And change to laughter the afflictive groan;
For laughter is man's property alone."

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ABOUT SOME FELLOWS.

CHAPTER I.

MEATH.

I SUPPOSE wherever there is a community there is always a "character" in it, and there is no exception to the rule at Eton. I know a fellow called Meath, and if any one ever deserved to be called a "character," he does. Only it wouldn't do to tell him so, as he would scorn the aspersion, and probably never speak to me again. Meath is so very touchy, and takes things to heart so—things that no one else would think about half an hour after they were said. He has a way of always saying what he means, and he thinks everybody else does, too, whether they are only in humbug or not.

In personal appearance Meath is not beautiful. In fact, I have heard it said that he is very much the other way. Perhaps this is partly the reason that he has not that enormous circle of acquaintance that some fellows have, for, though it is sad to have to say it, personal appearance goes a long way with a great many of us at Eton. "Know So-and-so?" says one elegant to another. "No; and don't want to." "Why not? He's not such a bad fellow." "Oh, don't know; he looks such a beast;" and poor So-and-so, who may be the best-natured fellow in the world, and who certainly had nothing to do with the making of himself, is kept at a distance by our handsome friend and

his own select circle. Because, if a fellow has nothing in him to draw others to him, and is not of a pushing disposition, he never gets on. And Meath is decidedly not of a pushing disposition; he is shy to a fault; he is even shy of himself, and if ever he breaks out in public with a brilliant or sagacious remark—and his remarks in public are usually to the point, though they are of comparatively rare occurrence—he will immediately relapse into himself, and seem as if he would like to hide his head somewhere out of public notice. He is inclined to be absent-minded, and he is very slow of speech; "Suppose I have nothing to say," was the reason he once gave; and at another time, "I think it's a very bad thing to make statements that you can't prove; never say anything that you're not certain about, and then you'll profit by other persons' ignorance without exposing your own." It takes about half an hour to get a remark out of Meath; then perhaps if the conversation turns on a subject that he feels confident about, he may warm up and talk away like any ordinary person, but the chances are ten to one that he hangs fire, and conversation with him turns out to be a failure. Only let him be drawn out, though, and he appears as quite a different character; but the difficulty is the drawing him out.

This is Meath in public life: we will now try and investigate his character as a private individual. Meath at his tutor's is quite a different person to Meath out of doors; at his tutor's he has got the shyness rubbed off him by continual contact with the other fellows, and so, not being in continual fear of being snubbed, as he usually seems to be in public, he appears very conspicuously in domestic affairs. Talk? why, if he isn't stopped, he will let you have his opinion by the yard, and go on laying down the law about this and that for hours together. And he can be very funny, too, when he pleases, though it is in a very quiet way; there is a natural vein of sarcastic

humour about him, with which he can cut his opponent in an argument very sharply sometimes, though he always seems sorry for it afterwards; he isn't like most fellows, who take pleasure in getting the best of a discussion, but he has such regard for other people's feelings that he has actually been known to apologize for having convinced them against their will.

Then again, no one can find fault with him for being selfish. I suppose he would give up anything to oblige another fellow, but he does it in a way that takes half the favour away from the action, because he bores one so by apologizing for not being able to do more for one.

I have said he has not a very large acquaintance. Of course, by that I mean general acquaintance, but the few friends he has, who have taken the trouble to investigate him, and who have got used to his eccentric ways, are real friends, and not fellows who speak ill of their friends behind their backs. I'll allow they laugh at Meath and pity him, and say he's a "rummy sort of fellow, and that they can't make him out;" but then they tell him that to his face; and everybody laughs at Meath; sometimes, when he shakes off his usual mood, he laughs at himself, and determines to try and become like other fellows, and not live quite so much by maxim, but he soon relapses back into his former ways.

There is something in Meath that draws fellows to him for advice and sympathy in their troubles. I suppose it must be because he seems of such a naturally gloomy disposition. But if you go to him for advice you must expect to hear some plain home truths about yourself, as he has not the smallest hesitation in letting you know what he thinks of you. I don't think that one would stand as much from everybody; "but with Meath," as I once heard some one say, "it is different."

And then he amuses himself in quite a different way to anybody else. He always seems perfectly happy, but it is in

quite an original way of his own. He will always play at anything anybody wants him to, and occasionally he will do it for his own sake, when he has got one of his fits of "trying to be like other people" on him; but it always results in a failure, and is always followed by another relapse.

As for his temper, he grumbles a good deal, but it always ends in his grumbling himself into a good one. If he had lived in the old philosophic times, he would have made a capital Stoic, with a mixture of good-natured cynicism, if such a thing can be imagined, thrown in—but there! I might go on for hours trying to describe Meath, and I should never be able to do so. If any one could be competent to give an opinion of him, it would be myself, as I have known him since he was the height of a water-jug, and he and I have always lived near each other both in the country and in London, and have been educated at the same private school together, and have been at Eton for the same period of our existence, and yet I have never got to the bottom of Meath, and, what is more, I don't think I ever shall, or that any one else ever will. He is quite indescribable. He doesn't make any great noise in the world, but he thinks a great deal—there are, in a sort of way, two Meaths in him, and when they have determined on a thing, and laid their heads together, you will generally find that in the end he gets his object. I shouldn't wonder if Meath became a great man in the end, in spite of the majority of the world not being able to understand him, and so, to save themselves the trouble of inquiring into him, putting him down as "mad."

One half's history will be sufficient to show how difficult it would be to form any definite opinion about him—the Easter Half, for instance. Now the Easter Half was, or at any rate Meath intended it to be, a very important episode in his career. It was about a week before the end of the Christmas holidays that his father called him into his study for a little private conversation, and pointed out certain

things to him that disquieted his soul very much. It was no more than he had heard at the beginning of every half before—just a little sober advice; but Meath was in a mood which was inclined to make mole-hills appear as mountains, and so, instead of saying "Yes," making up his mind to remember, and then going away and waiting for the time to come for his troubles to begin, like any ordinary person, he thought it necessary to go and brood over all the imaginary difficulties that lay before him, and make preparations for a general "reform," being, by the way, about as steady-going and hard-working a fellow in the way of school work and school discipline as any master could hope to meet.

Well, in his opinion, the matter required deep consideration. He put on an old hat and a great coat, took up the first umbrella that he came upon in the hall—it happened to be the one that usually went out with the family perambulator—and, though it was raining cats and dogs, went out to have a good "meditate," as he called it. It seemed particularly odd to him, but he had been out fifty times before in the holidays, and never met a single Eton fellow, and why on that particular day, just because he happened to be dressed rather shabbily, should fate have ordained that he should meet more than in all the rest of the time put together, all equipped in the latest style, and all of whom seemed rather surprised at his outward appearance as compared to theirs? It was a little aggravating, to be sure, but Meath was in a philosophical mood that day, and soon got over the first feeling of uncomfortableness, and consoled himself with the reflection that "they were the fools, coming out in their best clothes on a day like that." "Besides," he said, on discussing the matter with his other self, "if they depend on their hat for their reputation, I'm sorry for them." Having fully agreed with himself on this point, he was contented.

But he found that meditation was not compatible with crowded thoroughfares, as he kept running up against every-

body, and getting his ideas rudely knocked out of him; so he returned home, went upstairs, took off his boots, and threw himself on to his bed to try and think there.

What was there to think about? This was to be his last year at Eton, and he would have to work hard during that year, as his future prospects depended entirely on how he did it. That was a very alarming thought—really now, if he had ever thought anything about future prospects at all, he had thought they depended more on one's after life. So he had to turn Sap. And how was he to set about that? He went to a book-shelf at the head of his bed, took down a book called "Oldminster, a Tale of School Life," and returned to his former position on his bed to skim through it, and try to glean a few facts from it concerning Saps. The facts that he did glean were that the hero thereof, a Sap, was short-sighted, preferred Greek plays to all other kinds of literature, and was generally in a state of ill-health, arising from loss of appetite. Now Meath, on the contrary, had hitherto rather prided himself on the goodness of his eyesight, he could not own to that partiality for Greek plays that seemed to be required, and as for his health, sad to relate, he was inclined to be too robust, while his appetite—well, the less said about that the better. Finally, the Sap in the book terminated by an early decease, and if Meath was to go and do that, he didn't exactly see what was to become of his future prospects. With all these disadvantages, what was to be done about turning Sap? He couldn't see.

Then there were other things to be thought about. Now he was getting older and higher in the school. "When a fellow gets to my part of the school, you know," he ought to be gaining more influence and living in a more careful way —squint-wise, Meath expressed it to himself—one eye on the present and the other on the future. Meath was utterly forgetful of the fact that it had always been one of his special characteristics to fidget about things that were going to

happen a month or so afterwards. Well, now he would begin at once by packing up his things, so that there would be no danger of his being made late by the servants putting it off till the last moment. "There was only a week, you know," before he went back. After he had packed up he would consider what were the greatest faults he had to repair, and then put down some resolutions about setting to work about it. Resolutions, Meath thought, always look well on paper, and writing them was an art he was always skilled in.

He pulled out his portmanteau from under his bed, and in it he found a beautifully written resolution lying in company with a large collection of classical authors, Latin and Greek dictionaries and grammars, all of which had been put there at the end of the half before. "Resolved, at my tutor's instigation, to do a certain amount of work every day during the holidays." But then it *was* the holidays, and things were always turning up and sticking themselves in the way. Besides the servants oughtn't to have left the books in the portmanteau—how could he be expected to know where they were when he wanted them? By which can be seen of how forgiving a disposition Meath is, even to himself, whom he is always trying to keep in such good order.

But that was nothing to the point. He was going to begin his new scheme at once. He put all his boots into his portmanteau, because boots are always the most difficult things to stow away. He could just leave everything that would be wanted for that last week on the top, and then the rest could go in, and he would have his packing off his mind. But there were such a lot of things that must be left on the top—indeed it seemed that everything must be left on the top—so in the end he gave it up as a bad job and went down to tea.

There he rather incautiously announced that he was going to "reform." Of course, it was only to be expected that he should receive a little wholesome advice from the other

members of the family. But much meditation and the great weight on his mind had made Meath rather out of temper that evening, and he was inclined to be a little snappish.

He wasn't an escaped convict," he said, "going to begin life afresh. He was only going to turn over a new leaf and mend up a few faults. But then one's people, especially the ladies, are so apt to jump at conclusions and then tumble over them into extremes."

Lastly, as he finished up that day, there was to be considered, what would the other fellows say? Would he have to abandon all his former acquaintances and seek out a higher and more intellectual circle? And would his former friends scoff? Well, they were all of much the same age and in much the same position as himself, and perhaps they had been having talks with their people, and were going to improve too. If not, who knew that he might not, perhaps, convert them into the error of seeing their ways? Furneaux, Pevensey, who had always been a trouble to him by coming into his room whenever he was working and didn't want him, and then, too, there was Stortford, those were the fellows at his tutor's whom he was chiefly with, and who would be his chief obstacles—well, they would get used to it in time, no doubt, and as for Stortford—he was about Meath's own size, he'd better scoff—he'd get his head knocked off. Meath can be very fierce when he is aroused, at least he says so, but I never saw any one who could arouse him.

Altogether there was a great deal to be considered about work, about keeping up his position in the school, and all that. Only he didn't see where to begin, and so came to the conclusion he'd better wait to see what turned up.

CHAPTER II.

BEGINNING.

"WINDSOR station!" Meath opened the carriage door, precipitated himself on to the platform, with his hands full of small baggage, and his mind of great intentions, nearly killing a porter in the act, and rushed off immediately to get a fly. He was going to be particularly sagacious that night, and secure one early before he went to look after his luggage, so that he would not have to wait till goodness knew when before he could get up to his tutor's.

But he was not destined to be so fortunate in his movements as the wisdom of them deserved. Arrived at the barrier, he was stopped by a ferocious official, who demanded his ticket. That entailed putting down everything that he had in his right hand, and having to bend down to feel about in the inmost recesses of the right-hand pocket of his great-coat, and when that proved unsuccessful, doing ditto on the left side with a similar result; the end of his umbrella being stuck out horizontally under his arm to be out of the way, creating a pleasing effect amongst the impatient crowd who were waiting till he should have moved on and made way for them. Eventually the ticket turned up in the inside pocket of his coat, and Meath passed on in triumph, and treating the remarks of the vulgar herd with the contempt that they deserved.

Every variety of fly-man to be had when Meath came out at the door of the station,—fly-men in high hats, low hats, no hats,—all bawling and screaming, each laying hold on a different article of baggage, each claiming the unfortunate first-comer as his own special property, and the whole reminding him of promises made some bygone period of

engaging them one and all. Where on earth all these flys and fly-men crop up from for the occasion is a mystery to me, and I should think to anybody else. Meath felt quite the necessary amount of pride at all this attention, he afterwards said, but then, you see, he could only come up to his tutor's in one fly at a time.

And besides that he had his choice, and he thought he would make a good use of it. What he wanted was a fly-man who knew something of elementary arithmetic, and who would not look upon himself as a blighted fellow-being when Meath tried to demonstrate to him by all the rules of the immortal Cocker that the fare for half a mile, at a shilling a mile and sixpence for the driver, was not three-and-sixpence, subject to exceptions, of course, as in the case of small lower boys, when it is five shillings, and who would not feel called upon to express his doubts as to the gentility of Meath's parentage when he was offered half-a-crown. "'Where ignorance' means eighteen-pence into the driver's pocket," said Meath to himself, "no doubt, 'tis folly,' &c.," but the common herd might put up with this sort of thing; he was going in for a higher class of article altogether, and wanted an enlightened fly-man; he was going to strike for his rights and—well, what he wanted was a fly-driver who wouldn't be likely to strike him back.

And there, not far off him, was the very thing he wanted. Perched up on a fly-box, in an enormous hat, and a great-coat several sizes too large for him, was a youth of about Meath's own size, perhaps rather smaller, evidently making his first essay in fly-driving on this particular night. If this fly-boy made any objection, or indeed if he gave vent to any expression save of grateful surprise at the condescension shown by paying him at all, he would be instantly slain. Meath engaged him on the spot.

Putting his small traps on board the fly-boy's vehicle, and bidding him take care of them while he went after the rest

of his *impedimenta*, which last word was intended to impress the fly-boy somehow, but didn't seem to have the desired effect, Meath returned to the luggage-van. There was the usual crowd of fellows round it, though it was the last train, and the usual cascade of portmanteaus, &c., issuing therefrom, while the porters were also, as usual, displaying their physical capacities by "putting the portmanteau," "heaving the hamper," and other athletic feats of the same sort. Meath saw his unfortunate hat-box surging about in the sea of boxes, and made a bold dash across to save it, but a severe contusion on the hat from one box, and a "by your leave," accompanied by the full weight of a porter on his toe, soon sent him back again with several severe external injuries, not to speak of the internal vexation arising from perceiving that the chances were ten to one in favour of his being the last to get away, in spite of his having been so jolly sharp in securing a fly. When the cascade had stopped, of course his luggage had crawled away under everybody else's—that was only natural, and when it did come to light at last, a porter couldn't be found to carry it to the outside of the station. What with one thing and another Meath began to feel desperate, and that he would have to tear his hair soon, or do something of that sort to relieve his feelings, or else he would go mad. And who was that confounded fellow who would keep running his umbrella into his back? That was the third time. Really it was getting past all bearing. Meath turned round to remonstrate, and perceived a sturdy-looking figure wrapped in an ulster, from the interior of which ulster proceeded a voice,—"Hullo, Bunter!" It was Pevensey. Meath was delighted. "Hurra! Pevensey!" he said, "how are you?" Thus to meet a companion in misfortune was an unlooked-for piece of luck.

But Pevensey wasted no time in useless greetings. "Go and get a fly," he said. Meath told him he'd got one. "Then you'd better go and keep it, and I'll come directly." Just

then Meath secured a porter, and went in search of his fly-boy. What made him so obedient to Pevensey he couldn't afterwards make out when he was thinking over it; there was a something in the general goings on of that evening that made him take everything for granted, and not question the rights and wrongs of anything. The fly-boy had disappeared! and with all the small luggage. Thoughts of actions at law, pictures of himself pleading for justice to be done on that fly-boy in terms that shook the benches with their eloquence; then the fly-boy, cowering in his guilt, telling piteous tales of a starving widow mother, with a large family solely depending on the profits of his fly-driving, and the whole thing finishing up with a magnanimous forgiveness on his part, and the fly-boy becoming his indebted slave for ever in consequence—all this arose before Meath's mind's eye as he stood at the station door, and began to think that the fly-boy had levanted. What Eton fellow had ever had a lawsuit on his own hook before? He would be a marked character. "Meath, the fellow who had a law-suit." But, alas! in the distance he caught sight of a great coat surmounted by a hat, making signals to him with a whip; and he knew there couldn't be two such combinations of hat and coat in the world at the same time; so his hopes of a lawsuit and its accompanying romance were disappointed after all. But he made the best of a bad job, and dived through the stream of vehicles that kept passing the door, followed by his faithful porter, at the eminent risk of their lives, reached his fly, sat himself therein, and waited for Pevensey.

Pevensey was a long time coming, and, when he did come, he persisted in looking about in every direction but the right one; and when at last he saw Meath, he shouted out in a painfully audible voice, "Oh, there you are, Bunter!" So aggravating, Meath said afterwards; as if he wanted every cad in the place to know that his nickname was Bunter. And indeed he wasn't going to submit to a nickname any

longer now if he could help; he looked upon nicknames as derogatory. He should speak to the fellows about it next day.

Pevensey had a moderate amount of luggage. First instalment—a hamper, two hat-boxes, and a rug. He put these down in a row on the pavement, and departed into the station again, whence he presently re-issued with another hamper, a bag, a bundle of umbrellas, sticks, &c., and followed by a porter bearing two large portmanteaus. These went into the row with the other things, and then, saying he would be ready in a minute, he entered the station a second time, and after another interval he came out with some more—a small portmanteau and a wooden box; while a third expedition produced a travelling bath. All this time the fly had got hopelessly into the way of those that wanted to come up, and the language that was going about was not altogether first class—rather of the "winged word" species; and Meath's fly-boy didn't appear in any way behind his fellow-drivers in the art.

Pevensey surveyed the array of luggage with the air of a commander inspecting a regiment, and, after mature consideration, remarked that he thought that was all. Meath was gratified to hear it, only wondered where on earth it was all going to be put.

However, the fly-boy seemed to have perfect confidence in the holding capacities of his conveyance, and between him and the porter and Pevensey, the baggage was piled up on it in some miraculous manner. They didn't consult Meath's convenience, there is that to be said for them; he got walled up into a corner quite unable to move, while, to add to the horror of the situation, the fiery steed belonging to the fly behind engaged himself in a minute inspection of his coat collar, with an evident view to its fitness as an article of diet. Still all that didn't matter to Pevensey; the luggage was all up; he clambered in himself somehow, took his seat saddlewise on the top of a portmanteau somewhere, gripped

hold of as many articles of baggage as possible, told the boy where to drive to, and they started.

Meath was not unnaturally a little curious to know the reason for Pevensey's bringing back such an enormous quantity of luggage, and so as soon as they were clear of the station he asked him. Then Pevensey seemed to become for the first time aware of Meath's presence in the fly, and extending a leg as the only limb he had to spare towards him to shake, he inquired after his health. Meath satisfied him on that score and repeated his question.

Just then they arrived at the bridge, and the conversation was interrupted. The toll-man came out to demand their tribute, Pevensey insisted on paying, though Meath had his money ready, and Pevensey had to unbutton about three coats to get at his; they were cheated out of the systematic half-penny that that toll-man thinks it his duty to deduct from every sixpence offered him to change—something on the commission, I suppose. "Right," he said, and again they urged on their wild career. Meath says he is going to send in his bill to the Windsor Municipal Authorities for excess of half-pence soon.

Then Pevensey answered, "Oh, luggage!" he said, meditatively, "yes, there is rather a lot; got a minor coming this half; ill now, you know, not coming back just yet; look here, Bunter, I've got a great deal to say to you;—mind that hat-box!—been having a row with people; got to sap; no end of a kick-up there! mind!! ah!!! I told you so!!!!" Off rolled a hamper, and after it had been picked up, Pevensey was too much engaged in watching his luggage, which became more and more endangered every moment, to be able to talk any more. Meath, too, had to sit holding on teeth and eyelids to about seventeen different articles at once, and could only sit and wonder what the disturbances in the bosom of the Pevensey family could have to do with his bringing back all his minor's luggage.

It *was* a drive. The driving of that fly-boy was as the driving of Jehu, or perhaps even more so; the vehicle swayed about like a ship at sea, and they tore up through the blackness of the night like a fire-engine. Nothing but an Eton fly-horse could have gone at that pace with such an amount of luggage behind it. Meath thought, as he held on breathlessly, momentarily expecting to find himself lying a mangled corpse in the road, that if he were that quadruped's owner he should entertain serious thoughts of entering him for the Derby.

Barnes' Pool Bridge was reached in safety, however, and there was the usual collection of cads waiting to follow and take down the luggage. Meath and Pevensey both holload to them politely that they weren't wanted, as they had nothing to give them, but they followed nevertheless. Then Pevensey waxed wroth at their persistence. He shook off his silent mood, and rousing himself like the lion in his lair, he stood up in the back of the fly, and nearly fell out in his efforts to reach at their knuckles with his umbrella as they hung on behind. Entreaties were of no avail; and the cads were quite impervious to abuse. "Sit down, Pevensey," said philosophic Meath, "you'd much better; these cads are a fine old Eton nuisance, and must be encouraged." Pevensey listened to his argument and sat down muttering.

At their tutor's at last, but, surprising to relate, it being only half-past eleven, Meath having come back by as late a train as he could, by way of inaugurating "the new style of life," the house was shut up, and every one appeared to have gone to bed. Meath, Pevensey, the fly-boy, and all the cads posted themselves each at a basement window, and proceeded to rap with a view to attracting the attention of somebody inside. After a little time two heads appeared at an upper casement—Bexley and Mardon were the names of the owners—they had not yet gone to bed, and after hailing the weary travellers and ascertaining their wants, they exerted

themselves in their behalf on the inside, and at last succeeded in arousing a somnolent menial who unbarred the massy portal and granted them admittance. The fly-boy was paid three shillings in consideration of the lateness of the hour and the trifle of extra luggage, and then there were the others to be settled with. Not being desirous of a row, Meath and Pevensey mustered all the coppers they had in hand and presented them with them. Result, fourpence half-penny. Four cads—all astonished at the magnificence of the gift; Pevensey remarked that the night was chilly and shut the door.

The above-mentioned menial utterly declining to bring up the luggage, Meath and Pevensey had to do that for themselves, with Bexley and Mardon's help, making a good deal of noise up the stairs during the transaction, and as it struck a quarter to Friday morning, Meath arrived in his own domain. He said to himself that he would—aw—just unpack—aw—aw—the things he—aw—waw-nted for the night and leave the rest for the next morning, as, to tell the truth, he was—aw—aw—aw—rather tired that night. Pevensey wanted him to hear what he had to say, but it was too late, so Meath told him he had better wait till the morning, and accordingly he went to have his say in Mardon's room.

The odd thing was, how all the things had worked their way down to the bottom, so that everything had to be pulled out to get at them. Meath began to think that perhaps, on the whole, it might almost have been better to have left it to the servants to pack after all; perhaps they had some method of putting the things in so that they wouldn't shift themselves about after the portmanteau was shut up. And then his sponge, and other toilette requisites, not to be found anywhere, till he looked inside his hat-box, and there they were! How surprising! Just where he'd put them—like a conjuring trick! Only, talking about hat-boxes, were gibus hats allowed at Eton? because, in the course of the

porters' gambols at the station, Meath's hat had been reduced to something of that description. He thought not; he would have to get a new one next day: meanwhile—mem.; not to put his hat-box into the luggage-van again.

A faint glimmer of fire in the grate. "Excellent boys' maid!" thought Meath, "but will she come for my candle to-night? It is rather late, to be sure, but nobody knows that her eccentricities mayn't prompt her to look in after it at all sorts of hours. Best to leave it lighted, or she may tumble into all my shirts while she is feeling about for it in the dark." He would give her a quarter of an hour to think about it, and with this thought he got into bed. . . . But at 12.50 a.m. Friday, he sat up suddenly, and perceiving the candle still burning, exclaimed, "Hallo; I say!" and felt down by the side of his bed for a slipper, which he threw at the candle. It had the desired effect of putting it out, but something went over besides, and he had to get out to see what it was; apparently, the water-jug, from the swamp all over the room, making steady progression towards his portmanteau. But he put off further investigations till the next morning.

Pevensey was still talking in Mardon's room. What irregular fellows those were! did they ever intend to go to bed? They were not going in for a higher state of things—they wanted converting.

And Meath, the virtuous, dropped placidly off to—sleep!

CHAPTER III.

GETTING ON.

SCENE, Meath's room; time, after twelve on the first day; and Meath himself discovered in his shirt-sleeves, very busy in the arrangement of his room. There was plenty for him

to do. His room had been re-papered, and the pictures had all to be put up again; also re-carpeted, and the workmen, with the characteristic acuteness of their class, had put all the furniture back into positions that he didn't like. At least, that was if he was to believe the boys' maid. "Lor, sir," she said, when he asked her about it at breakfast, "you know I always puts the things back as you likes them." Meath hadn't known it before, but refrained from expressing surprise at the news, for fear of hurting her feelings. Hammer, hammer, hammer. Meath felt that he was getting on very well, and that he could congratulate himself on the skill with which he had been settling his arrangements. He had actually only hammered his own fingers about six times in the course of the transaction; and the time had been when he couldn't drive a nail in without first bending about half-a-dozen, not to speak of the loss of temper entailed by severe raps on the fingers, every second knock. Oh, yes! there could be no doubt he was becoming less awkward. And some of those walls did require great skill to inveigle a nail into them at all, while others wanted a certain degree of physical courage, when every stroke of the hammer produced a series of internal noises that made one doubtful if it wouldn't be better to put on one's hat and quit the premises. Meath thought he had done enough for the present, so sat down to rest, and for a few minutes' calm meditation over the events of the half—as far as it had gone.

His slumbers that morning had been peaceful and unbroken —save at about six, when the boys' maid had been in to do his fire and plunged headlong with all her cleaning apparatus into his shirts. When she had gone, he turned over and went to sleep again until about half-past eight, when he awoke to realize the fact that he wasn't at home any longer, and that it might be about time to think about early school. Accordingly he dressed, but when he got there the master was gone, so how on earth could Meath be expected to be there if

he wouldn't wait a few minutes? Perhaps Meath might have been in a little better time himself, but then it *was* only the first morning.

When he came back to his tutor's, he went round to visit the rest of the fellows, and found them all in Vernant's room, the second captain of the house. Wolfin, the captain, being in sixth form, hadn't put in an appearance yet, and so all the fellows were clamouring to Vernant to supply them with fags, and Meath added his voice to the number. Pevensey wanted him to choose his minor, because he said "he wanted some one whom he could trust." Meath accepted the compliment but declined the fag, as he didn't want to have to wait till Pevensey minor chose to recover and come back and then take his fortnight's grace as a new fellow. And as he was going to become intellectual this half, he wanted an intellectual fag, so he chose a fellow called Runnet, not that he knew much of him, but whom he was sure was very intellectual. He had an enormous development of forehead, and there was a *je ne sais quoi* about his eye that told Meath that he was above the common type of fag.

Everybody was in an excessive state of joviality, and everybody was glad to see everybody else. "I wonder how long it will all last," said old cynic Meath to himself. What chiefly vexed Meath was that every one seemed to have grown in the holidays but himself. He thought that it would be a good opportunity to try and make some sort of protestation against being called Bunter, but the others didn't seem to look upon the matter at all in the serious light as he did, as hurtful to his dignity, and only laughed and thumped him rudely on the back, and Sortell, "that great fool who originally gave me the name" (said Meath), declared that "really now he came to think of it, Meath looked more 'Bunter' than ever." Meath never could himself see the appropriateness of the nickname himself, though Sortell did say that it was so "expressive" of him. Not that appropriateness matters in the slightest

at Eton with regard to nicknames, as the more inappropriate they are the more they seem to stick to the nick-nominee. For instance, Clowborough—about forty-two inches round the waistcoat—Sortell, a universal tease, and a great wag, had once compared him to a slim little dickey-bird, and offered him a lump of sugar; "Dickey," Clowborough had been ever since. Well, well, Meath supposed he must put up with it; only it was rather hard having to go about attached to a name one didn't like.

Then breakfast. The new fag seemed all right so far; quite intellectual enough to know how to make tea, at any rate. Then Meath unpacked. Pevensey wanted to help him, but Meath knew pretty well by this time what Pevensey's help was, and thought of the fate of the gardener and his bear, so declined with thanks. Pevensey had been very mysterious all the morning, and had been seeming to have something on the tip of his tongue several times in the course of it, coming into Meath's room for the purpose of saying it, but the weight on his mind seemed something too great to be lifted with ease, and he had done nothing but give Meath expressive looks whenever he met him about.

Eleven o'clock school. First appearances are everything, said Meath, as he discovered that it had struck the quarter-past some time, and caught up his writing materials and rushed downstairs in the hope of getting in early so as to be able to have it out with the master about his non-attendance at early school. He rushed out of his tutor's door and ran slap in his master on the way up to school. "Served him right," thought Meath, "if I did knock all his wind out of him: he ought to have been at chambers." But the master was in a pleasant humour, and when he had recovered from the shock, he said, "As usual, Meath." "As usual," said Meath indignantly to himself, "I'd like to know what he means by 'as usual.' Does he mean I'm going to be late all this half because I happened to be rather slow about getting up all

last half? Well, he'll see." Then as he calmed down a little, "No, it's not going to be as usual this half. I'm going to turn over a new leaf. Only I wish I wasn't up to the same master again; I could have begun better; as it is, we know each other's faults. Only that's the worst of getting up into the higher parts of the school; one stagnates so."

However, the master didn't seem to think the offence so very serious, so Meath forgave him, and they went into school. Holiday task; Meath had sapped at his rather well and so did a pretty good paper, which put him in a better temper with himself. Stortford also, who was one of the fellows whom he had been afraid might be an hindrance to his sapping plans, also did a good paper, which looked as if he was going to do something in that line. Altogether things seemed to be combining to help him on.

"So far, so good," Meath finally summed up with.

Some one was coming down the passage. Was he coming in there? and if so, who was it? Meath had once been well up in footsteps and could tell most fellows' but he didn't seem to know this one somehow. From the weight of it he should say it was Pevensey, but the owner didn't seem to be in any way musically inclined, as he wasn't dancing or singing or whistling as Pevensey usually did. The door handle moved. The person was coming in. The door opened.

CHAPTER IV.

PEVENSEY'S PLANS.

IT was Pevensey after all. He must have adopted a new footstep. He came in slowly, shut the door after him, a thing Meath had never known him do before, walked up to the table, took his seat on it, put his feet on the only chair, and began:-

"Meath."

Meath was surprised, and thought it must be something

very important and solemn coming if Pevensey addressed him by his name. In his lighter moments it was usual for him to call him Bunter, or by some other equally endearing term. In fact when Meath came to think of it, he scarcely ever remembered having heard his proper name from Pevensey's lips at all. It seemed almost a mistake at the time to answer, for fear Pevensey might have been addressing somebody else. Still he supposed he ought to say something.

"Well," he replied, "before you begin, supposing you get off that table: likewise remove your legs from that chair; I want them to stand upon."

Pevensey didn't say anything. He preserved strict silence —Meath really began to be anxious about his health, as he had never known him so submissive before—and without even grumbling he took his legs slowly and sedately off the chair, got off the table, and then, though he had his choice of the ottoman, the arm-chair, and the window-sill, he preferred opening one of the bureau-drawers and settling himself among Meath's shirts. After all this preparation he began again, talking in a sort of half-sleepy tone, as if partly thinking of something else all the time.

"Now, look here, Meath"—here Meath began hammering —"what I wanted to say was"—a pause—"are you going to attend, or are you going to keep on that beastly hammering row?"

Meath thought he ought to show him that he was perfectly able to attend while he went on hammering, although he'd got his mouth full of nails. He tried to say "All right; go on, I can listen;" but it only resulted in "Um-um, Aw-aw, boddle-coddlem," or something like that, and he nearly choked in the effort. However, Pevensey seemed to understand and to be satisfied, and began for the third time:

"Well, then, look here,—you know—the fact is—this is it."

Meath supposed he would have it soon, but it seemed a

tender subject with Pevensey, that didn't like to be handled too roughly.

"Well, what it is, is my people and I have been having no end of a row; you know my tutor sent home a report last half and said I was getting idle; horrid shame, you know, I wasn't at all well, don't you remember?"

Meath couldn't say that he did, but Pevensey might have been suffering from some hidden malady, so he wouldn't compromise himself by denying it. He jerked his head, which might mean anything, and Pevensey went on. Now he had once started, he gradually warmed to his subject.

"Well, you see, my people say I'm getting too old, and we've had no end of a row,"—now it was once out he seemed to be fond of recalling his family jars—"and so they say if I don't work hard I shan't get into the army,"—here he began to get faster and faster—"and so if I don't look out what I'm up to, and jolly well mind my eye, my governor says, they're-going-to-take-me-away-and-put-me-to-a-cram-mers-and—look here! you've got that picture all skew-eye; I wouldn't put it there if I were you!"

Now the string of his tongue was loosed all this had come out like water out of a bottle, without stops and all in one breath. He had worked himself up to a furious pitch of excitement, and now he jumped up alongside of Meath on the table, seized the hammer and tried to show him the way it ought to be done. Meath had to resist in silence as he had his mouth full of nails. At last, after nearly upsetting the table between them, he managed to get Pevensey off it. After that he thought perhaps he'd better lay down the hammer and nails in the window-sill in case of accidents, till he wanted them. Meanwhile Pevensey had cooled down and settled himself on the window-sill, where he took up the hammer and began waving it up and down as if getting up steam to go on with. Then he fixed his eyes on Meath and waited. He seemed to expect him to make a remark.

"Well?" said Meath.

"Well?" repeated Pevensey, quite indignantly, "is that all you've got to say? Why, can't you see what I mean?"

Meath couldn't see why he need be so offended, and could only say that he supposed he had got to sap, and that the best advice he could give him was to do it.

"But, you idiot, can't you see? Now I don't think it would be a bad thing if you'd be a good fellow, and you know you were always such a—"

Knock, knock, knock. He had got hold of Meath's best brass-headed nails at three a penny, and was using them to perpetuate his memory by driving them, regardless of expense, so hard and fast into the window-sill that there seemed little or no hope of ever getting them out again. Meath remonstrated, and Pevensey said he was always fussing about trifles, and when Meath represented to him that such reckless extravagance was anything but a trifle, he said he'd get him some more some day. Meath put the hammer and nails out of his reach, and he changed his situation to the top of the washing-stand. He took out a pencil, began tossing it up and down and continued,—

"Well, as I was saying, you were always such a sap."

Meath said he was glad to hear it, but he hadn't been aware of the fact.

"Well, at any rate, you were always more of a sap than me."

Meath remarked that *that* wasn't altogether improbable, upon which Pevensey took offence at something, and hurled a book at him. He dodged it, and Pevensey went on again.

"Don't be a fool; look here, I was going to say, only you would interrupt—"

"I didn't," said Meath; "it was you."

"Shut up, it wasn't, you did. Now look here, don't you think as you were always such a sap that it would be a good

thing if you constituted yourself my—my—hang it all! what's the watering-place in the south of France where people go and gamble and have consumption, you know?"

Meath suggested Nice or Cannes, but those didn't seem to be what Pevensey wanted. Then he tried another mode of *memoria technica*.

"No, you ass! the thing, the man-of-war affair that the Yankees invented."

"Alabama?" said Meath. Then it struck him what Pevensey wanted, "Monitor?"

"Yes, of course, Monitor, that's it. Now, don't you think you could be my sort of Monitor, don't you know? like that fellow in Homer last half—Tele—thingammy, Telescope, or something of that sort?"

"Oh yes," said Meath, "Mentor you mean," and wondered what on earth Pevensey could be driving at.

"Yes, that's it. Well, couldn't you be my Mentor? make me sap, you know, because I don't want to have to leave, you see; I want to get into the boats this year."

Meath said he didn't exactly see how he was to make him sap.

"Why, you see, I'm such a lively sort of chap: I always forget. I want some one to call me to order and remind me I've got work to do. A word in season, a word in reason, or whatever the proverb is. Now, if you'd be a good fellow; and then I'd come and sap in your room, and we'll get on well, won't we?"

Meath promised to do his best, and Pevensey said it was all right, and so plans were to be made out the next day, and they were to start fair on the Monday. Now he had relieved his mind of its burden, Pevensey seemed himself again. He changed the topic and asked Meath "if he thought this tune was right?" Meath turned round to see what he could mean, and found he had been employing himself in doing what he called "composing a Moody and Sankey's hymn"

on Meath's new wall-paper. Meath reproved him for his mischievous habits, considering that, as his Mentor, he had a perfect right to do so. Pevensey expressed deep contrition, and made a considerably worse mess trying to smudge it out. Then he said it wouldn't matter, it didn't show—though he knew perfectly, as well as any one, that it was in the most conspicuous part of the room—or, look here, Meath must put a picture over it—or—he suddenly remembered he had important business somewhere, and took his departure.

So there Meath had Pevensey's reformation on his hands, as well as his own. Well, he thought, perhaps it might be rather a help to him. At any rate, he was very well satisfied with his progress so far as the half had gone. The dinner bell rang. Now he was to see his tutor for the first time.

CHAPTER V.

WHICH TREATS OF GREAT RESOLUTIONS.

THERE was one thing that went a great way to help Meath in his schemes for amendment, and that was that he was very sanguine about them. When he retired to bed that first night he patted himself mentally on the back, and reflected that a great part of the half had been safely passed through. "I don't think any part of the half ever goes so slowly as the first two days," said he,—"except perhaps the last four."

At dinner that day he was only two from the top of the table, as the captain hadn't come back, and of course he felt very conscious of the dignity of his position, and did his best to show the new fellows how a person in his situation had to behave, because now he felt he ought to be looked up to in the same way that he had looked up to the fellows who were in his position when he was a new fellow. But he afterwards complained that they were a dull set, and didn't

seem to have a soul above their victuals, and so his efforts for their good were lost upon them. And then that ass, Stortford, asked him if he was unwell, as he was frowning so, and when he said something about their having something to support, Stortford stared, and looked under the table, as if he thought the leg had given way. Then his tutor seemed amused at something; most likely Stortford's idiotcy, Meath supposed.

After dinner he went to pay a formal visit to his tutor, who wanted him to account for his having come back so late the night before. The only excuse Meath could think of was that he hadn't come back earlier, which seemed to satisfy his tutor, and so finding him in such a congenial mood, he embraced the opportunity of asking him about what he ought to do about turning Sap and generally good and studious. And what did his tutor tell him? Why, he actually said that if he contented himself with doing his regular work properly he needn't trouble about anything extra, at any rate, for the present; also that he hadn't had much to complain of in him as yet, and he needn't fret himself about his behaviour. "So there, you see," said Meath, "that gives me quite a new set of ideas. A fellow, it seems, can be a sap without living in a perpetual state of Greek play. And then to think I haven't been so thoroughly wicked after all. Why, from what my people said—perhaps, though that was only to scare me into the right path."

Still, after he'd concocted his plans, it seemed such a pity to give up all idea of becoming a regularly interesting student, fainting away with a cry of joy as his name was read out at the head of the list, and all that sort of thing, "one might as well go on in the way one always had done, you know," so he hovered about his tutor's writing-table a bit, and after a little hesitation, put it mildly; "Did he think it worth while for him (Meath) to go in for the Newcastle?" His tutor smiled, and Meath isn't at all sure even now that

he wasn't meditating saying yes, only just then in came that great lout, Pevensey, to pay his respects, and evidently thinking it would be a glorious opportunity of showing his tutor what a good boy he was, what must he do but say he thought he'd better go in too. Then, of course, his tutor thought they were only chaffing him, and told them not to talk nonsense, and that they had better go. Meath *was* angry, he afterwards said. He lectured Pevensey all the way upstairs on the subject of having spoilt his chances by his awkwardness, but Pevensey only scoffed in a way not at all proper from a disciple to his Mentor. Meath was beginning to look forward to a pleasant sort of ward in Pevensey. He wasn't quite sure that it wouldn't have been as well to have undertaken the training of a Barbary ape while he was about it.

Three o'clock school with more holiday task; that was done satisfactorily. Then Meath went with Stortford to put down his name for the Beagles, as he was going to do everything methodically this half, and wanted to get his sports regular, so as not to interfere with his work. Stortford wouldn't be persuaded to enroll himself a member of the E. C. H. as he was going to take up rackets, and thought he wouldn't have time to do both. Stortford confided to Meath that he had to sap this half, "which is satisfactory," said Meath, "as now he won't interfere with me." Stortford and he agreed to mess together—begin on Sunday, for luck. Meath got a new hat, and they returned to five o'clock school.

Tea. There were, as yet no difficulties with the new fag. He did very little talking, and Meath thought it was rather early to draw him out before they became a little better acquainted. He intended to begin by asking him his views on the Eastern question. Mem; to get it up. It would never do to let his fag see he knew more about it than his master—if he did.

Pevensey came in while he was at tea, and said he thought that as he was to be his thingummy—he couldn't remember

the word, so Meath told him, Mentor—as Meath was to be his Mentor, he thought they ought to mess together, "so that he could always be under the constraining power of Meath's eye." Meath said he would think over it, and give him an answer next day. He took the matter into serious consideration, and weighed all the *pros* and *cons* of it, but he had messed with Pevensey in old days, and as he had vivid recollections of having been reduced to eating his victuals out of a saucer owing to a scarcity of crockery caused by Pevensey's suddenly becoming affected by a desire of acquiring the art of plate spinning as practised by the Japanese, he thought that, on the whole, when the time came he must break it gently but firmly to Pevensey that he was afraid that what with the minor when he came back and Stortford the mess would be too large for the boys' maid, "as indeed I think it would be," he said, "in more senses than one," and consequently would not be practicable.

After tea there was more talking done. "If we only do half, or say even a quarter of what we say we are going to," reflected our philosopher, "there will be a huge improvement visible in us, or if there isn't there will have been a considerable mistake somewhere. Only unfortunately I fancy I've heard something like it at the beginning of most other halves."

Stortford and Furneaux, another of Meath's old cronies, were the first to come in directly after tea. They took seats, not necessarily on chairs of course—Furneaux nearly sat on Meath's new hat that he had got after four—and made their plans while Meath listened. Occasionally they appealed to him to know if he "didn't think so." If he didn't happen to do so, they told him to shut up. Their plans were the same. They were both going up to matriculate at the end of the next half, and so they were going to sap together, and they came to the conclusion that as Meath didn't mind—"though I'm sure I don't know who told them so," said Meath—it would

be very nice for them to come and sap in his room. "It couldn't make any difference to him," they said, "he was always sapping." Meath was glad to hear every one regarded him as a sap as it encouraged him. Only it lowered his ideas of what a sap ought to be considerably.

However, when he suggested that perhaps it might be as well to consult him as the owner of the room before settling to sap there, especially as he had one tenant already in the shape of Pevensey, and Stortford was pretty certain to do his work there, as he always had done since they had come to Eton together, it only had the effect of making Furneaux thump the table in his enthusiasm and say, "Oh, then it's all right, and if Pevensey's going to sap—look here! we'll have a sort of a club and all sap together. Rather a good plan, eh, Sam?"—"Sam" being a new name conferred on Stortford in honour of the occasion.

So there it was carried *nem. con.* except Meath himself; and "you know," he said contentedly, "of course I didn't count." Then they yelled for Pevensey, who came in with a cup in one hand and a book in the other, just as he had got up from the middle of his tea—time 7.30 p.m.—and they set to work to make plans for the "Sap Club," as Pevensey, who rushed at the idea with his usual impetuosity, immediately denominated it. Some very extraordinary ideas about sapping came to light, "more extraordinary," Meath said afterwards, "even than those I had before that talk with my tutor. But once when I put in a word and mentioned what he said about doing our ordinary work without troubling ourselves about extra things the others decreed that to be all humbug!" "What *could* my tutor know about it? how could fellows be saps like that?" But when Meath asked them to define clearly what one ought to do they only said, "Oh, lots of things," and wouldn't condescend to enlighten him any more. Meath thought privately that his tutor might possibly know something about it, but they seemed so very fixed in their

ideas that he considered it best not to waste his breath arguing to no purpose.

Well, there they sat talking of all their good intentions, and so it was ten minutes to supper time when somebody recollected that there was a Homer lesson to learn for the next day, set probably on an emergency to keep them out of mischief. When Meath hinted that they had better learn it, Pevensey and Furneaux came to the conclusion that there wasn't time. Then he took upon himself, as Pevensey's Mentor, to order him to do it, but he was insubordinate and wouldn't obey. He said that sort of thing wasn't to begin till Monday. He also tried to prove theoretically that no regular work ought to begin till the first Monday of the half. Meath agreed with him there, but still he said that as the lesson *had* been set they had better learn it, to which Pevensey replied, "No, the masters oughtn't to be encouraged in bad ways." After Monday Meath would see what a regular sap he was going to be. But at that moment he must have some supper. This final argument seemed to settle the matter conclusively in his opinion, so he and Furneaux went down to eat while Stortford and Meath remained and learnt the lesson with a Lexicon, like two virtuous boys. "I can't help suspecting," Meath afterwards said, "that some one must have bagged all our cribs in the holidays, as we hunted for them everywhere and couldn't find one of them." When he came to think over it it struck him that they must have got hold of some of the wrong meanings to the words, because when they put them together the sense did come a little queer in places. Still they'd learnt the lesson, and no one could accuse them of using a crib, and they were all ready for the morrow, and felt generally virtuous.

Then they went down to prayers, and after prayers they waited about in the passage and talked to the captain, who had just come back. Up came their tutor, said that he was

glad to find them all together, as he had a great deal to say to them. Then followed the usual beginning of the half lecture, as Meath called it—the other fellows styled it a "jaw," not being so respectful. They were a young set at the top of the house, and perhaps it was harder for them to keep steady than if they were older. Still he hoped they would feel their responsibility in setting the lower boys a good example. Meath was sure he felt his for one. Then their tutor said at last that he thought they had better begin setting a good example at once by going to their rooms, and not talking and laughing about the passages. They went, and when he had gone they reassembled, all deeply impressed with what he had said, all feeling how very wicked they had been hitherto, and all fully resolving to make an entirely new beginning. The captain said he thought that the house had had rather a come-down at the end of the half before by all the big fellows leaving in a heap, and a young set coming suddenly to the top. Therefore it was their duty to do their best to get the house up to its old standard. All agreed, and all felt very much like the old patriots. This was Pevensey's sentiment, only he said "patriarchs." The captain left off somewhat abruptly, told them to go to their rooms, and went to unpack. They didn't go to bed: they went to Meath's room and held an agitation meeting on the subject. Dawtrey, who, though he had been away the greater part of the half before, seemed to think himself rather good on the subject, got up and gave them an oration of twenty minutes by college clock straight off, without stopping to give any one time to get a word in edgeways on "The honour of the house," and "how he hoped to see some of the school cups on their dinner-table at the end of the half." Great applause; and Sortell said he hoped so too—"would Dawtrey be so kind as to go and win a few?" Dawtrey retired to ponder over the matter. At that period of the proceedings, Meath found it was half-past ten, so requested the meeting to disperse, as he

was anxious to go to bed. They were agitating still in Furneaux's room when he fell asleep.

CHAPTER VI.

WHICH TREATS OF MORE GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

SUNDAY afternoons, if any one is curious to know when it is that I obtain all this information about Meath's private proceedings, are the times that I see most of him, and that he unburthens his soul to me. Somehow, it seems to me that it is the right thing for fellows who know each other at home to give up their Sunday afternoon more than any other day to one another's society, and so it is that Meath and I generally take a constitutional together on that day, and talk home shop.

When I called for Meath to come for our customary stroll on the first Sunday, it didn't strike me that he was quite so sanguine about his amendment as he had been at first. To begin with, there was Pevensey, whom he was beginning to regret having taken up as a pupil. Pevensey had begun well under his auspices by being late for early school on Saturday morning. This would have put any one out in their good resolutions, but Pevensey, who, when Meath as his Mentor tried to draw a moral from the circumstance, only repeated his old arguments about all this not mattering; only wait till Monday, and then great things were going to happen.

It was wet that Saturday, and so there was plenty of time to spare for the amendment—at least, in the talking line. Pevensey, Furneaux, and Stortford spent most of their after-twelve in Meath's room, composing rules for the Sap Club. Meath seemed very resigned about it. He always has been an easy-going sort of fellow, who grumbles considerably at his misfortunes, and makes a great show of resisting them, but when he thinks he would injure anybody by having his

own way, I know he would sooner die than not give in to them. He read out the rules to me, which he produced from where they had been stowed away by Pevensey, into one of his mantelpiece ornaments, accompanying them with comments of his own in a complacent sort of grumble.

"Look here, my paper; and Pevensey has ruined my best pen, underlining the 'forcible points,' as he called them. These rules weren't by any means all made by my consent, you know. At least, I don't think the rest of Club even took the trouble to ask me, but left me out in the cold altogether. Took it for granted, I suppose; 'thought I wouldn't mind' is what they always say when they've done anything without consulting me, and I object afterwards. Listen!

"RULES OF THE R.S.C.

"R.S.C. stands for either Regular or Royal Sap Club. 'Whichever you please, my dears,' explained Pevensey, 'you pays your money and you takes your choice.' Pevensey always will joke when every one else wants to be serious. There was a good deal of discussion about what the Club should be called. Stortford wanted it to be the Amalgamated Sap Society, but we thought people might make invidious remarks about the initials, so the proposal was rejected.

"Then comes a sentence I never remember having ever seen in any set of rules before, but Pevensey insisted on putting it in:

"*Know all men by these presents, that the following and hereafter going are now made and are henceforth always to remain the rules and regulations of the R.S.C.*

"Pevensey considers this sort of preamble very fine; 'very formal and lawyer-like,' he said. Only he called it the preliminary canter, and when I said that wasn't a lawyer-like term at all, he said he must have meant a Poll-parrotty excursion. I told him not to talk bosh, and he said

if I didn't believe him I'd better look it out in the Latin grammar; so, as I was anxious to know what he meant, I did, and found he had been thinking about Prefatory Excursion. I showed him, and he only said, 'yes,' he knew it was something about a poll-parrot, and triumphantly pointed out the first example of a simple sentence, *Psittacus loquitur*—the parrot speaks. Did you ever see such an ignorant brute? And that's the fellow I've got to educate! Well, we'll go on.

"RULE I.—*That this Club be called the R.S.C.*

"I thought a rule about the name rather superfluous, but the others all said every set of rules began with one about the name, so of course ours must.

"RULE II.—*That the meetings of the Club be held in Meath's room.*

"You know this was very nice, but I thought I had a little interest in the matter, so I tried to make a stand against it, but they only said that if a thing was carried by a majority, the whole club must agree to it. Of course I could say no more.

"RULE III.—*That Meath be chosen President.*

"Of course, I was proud of the honour done me, and returned thanks in a neat speech, saying I felt my responsibility, and would do my best to make them work, on which they said they weren't going to have me interfering with *their* work. In that case I didn't see much use in electing a president at all, but the question of my duties seemed to be solved to their satisfaction, at least, by the next rule—the offspring of Pevensey's fertile brain.

"RULE IV.—*That the President do provide biscuits for the Club.*

"I objected to this largely, but Pevensey said that it was necessary to have something to sustain a fellow when he was working hard. I said, all very well, but why should it be done at my expense? The others argued against this, that every dignity is attended by certain

inconveniences, and before I could say more they went on to concoct—

"RULE V.—*That certain convenient seasons be appointed for sapping by the Club.*

"This was rather vague, and I didn't quite understand it. My suggestion, however, that we ought to have a rule settling really what 'convenient seasons' were to be appointed, was cried down, 'as it would tie us down so,' which is just what I thought was one of the main objects of the Club. But, to quiet my doubts, they made the next rule.

"RULE VI.—*That these seasons be settled at the discretion of the majority of the Club.*

"Then I said I saw how it was. They weren't going to sap except when they chose, and we might just as well go on as we always had done. This didn't seem to have struck them before, and rather staggered them at first, when I pointed it out to them, but on recovery they said I would see it would all come right—as if it was going to do it of itself—and then they went on to make new rules, without stopping to consult over them.

"RULE VII.—*That the Club speak about nothing but work during the seasons appointed for sapping.*

"Sensible enough if it's only kept to.

"RULE VIII.—*That every member of the Club do keep exceedingly good and well-behaved, and orderly and quiet.*

"Rather a superfluity of virtuous adjectives required of us here."

"RULE IX.—*That each member do take up some scientific pursuit or other to keep himself steady.*

"Regarding a scientific pursuit as a kind of moral walking-stick, I suppose.

"RULE X. AND LAST.—*That these Rules be enforced.*"

"Pevensey then observed that it had stopped raining, which probably accounts for the rapid manner in which he had hurried through the last rules. He and Furneaux went out,

Stortford to his room, and I was left to reflect over these rules. Some of them seem rather queer still, you know, after much reflection. I tried to get out of Pevensey across the dinner-table what was meant by scientific pursuits, but he only said in a vague manner that it's all right; he and Furneaux have been talking over it; it is to keep us from wasting our time humbugging about the passages, though how scientific pursuits are to do that I don't exactly see. I suppose I must rest satisfied till the time comes that that and all the many other things are to be explained to me. And I want some information on other points. As President, I think I am in certain degree entitled to know what a President has to do—besides provide biscuits. Perhaps, however, if I wait till this eventful Monday, all mysteries will be solved. What do you think?"

I only said "Umph," and thought how oddly the world would go on if we were all like Meath.

After four was wet, so Meath did not go out on the chase. Pevensey did, though, and came home wet through, and savouring strongly of Chalvey mud, and reported he had been swimming about in the floods all the time, and that he had enjoyed himself very much. "Even allowing for trifling exaggerations on Pevensey's part," said Meath, "I'm glad I didn't go, as I don't think it can have been so pleasant." Meath went up town with Stortford for the "transaction of business," which consisted chiefly in Stortford's purchase of a stock of shaving materials, part of his aim at a higher life lying in the cultivation of two hairs that he had found on his chin. Stortford aggravated Meath by the way in which he persisted in calling him Bunter even in the shops. One polite shopman, indeed, in his anxiety to save the trouble of giving his name, wanted to know if he should send up the parcel to Mr. Bunter, and to what house? "As if a fellow could keep up any dignity under such circumstances," said Meath.

Then they wandered on to do what Stortford called in his newly-adopted high-flown style of language "study the beauties of nature," but what beauties of nature he expected to find down the back streets of Windsor Meath didn't know. After wandering about for some time their consciences struck them suddenly that they were where they ought not to be, and so as they had determined to do everything right, and were getting damp, they came home.

Meath started at his sap for Monday in the evening, and tried to make Pevensey do his, but he was insubordinate, and wouldn't. He said he must have his fling—by which, as far as Meath says he can make out, he meant throwing about any odd articles he happened to come across—till Monday. After that he was to become "utterly abandoned." Meath said he was sorry to hear it, and he replied, of course, he meant, "to Meath's care." Besides, he must unpack, and would Meath come and help him. The latter hinted that it didn't seem much like becoming orderly if he hadn't unpacked yet, and was told to mind his own business. He kept on bouncing in every five minutes or so, to consult Meath about some trivial matter or other, such as in which drawer he ought to put his collars, &c., and when Meath told him he really thought he might manage that for himself he wanted to know what was the good of his being his Mentor if he didn't give him advice.

"About eight o'clock," said Meath, "he came in here in a tremendous state of indignation with a telegram in his hand. 'Look here,' he said, 'I call it a disgusting shame. There, you know, I've got a minor coming this half, and my people were always jawing at me all last holidays on and off, about looking after him and taking care of him, and all that. Rather a good thing perhaps, it may make me keep straight.' Pevensey is rather fond of this expression, as if he regarded himself as something of the sweet-pea species that requires some artificial support. 'But that isn't it. Look here. I

thought it would be looking after him if I brought back everything for him, to save him the trouble when he got all right and came back. And I didn't say anything about it as I wanted to give the young beggar such a pleasant surprise. Well, then, what do you suppose? My people telegraphed after twelve to know if I'd got the clothes, as they'd been hunting all over the place for the last two days and couldn't find them anywhere. Of course, I had to telegraph back, and that spoilt all the pleasure of the surprise. That was number one; now for iniquity number two. They've just sent another telegram with as much abuse as they can decently put into a shilling's worth, and I've got to send all the luggage back again. I call it a beastly swindle. Just when I've been no end of a slave to the young owl of bringing back any luggage, and just when I've got it unpacked. Oh, it's enough to make any one swear they'll never do my minor a kindness again.'"

Meath suggested that possibly Pevensey minor might require something to put on during his stay at home, which didn't seem to have struck the major before, so he turned on his heel and departed. He saw no more of him before supper, but heard him at intervals in the next room anathematizing his minor's clothes as he repacked them.

More towards the "honour of the house" in the evening. When they were going down to prayers, a paper appeared on the notice board requesting the attendance of the first ten in the library afterwards. Accordingly down they went. Meath described the proceedings to me afterwards. While they were waiting for the Captain to come they occupied themselves by speculating what it could be, being divided between its being some common iniquity to be repaired or the library accounts to be made up. At last the Captain turned up, and with him Vernant, looking very majestic, with an enormous inkpot, and some formidable-looking documents. They all took their seats, and the Captain made them an oration. As

it was their intention to raise the house to a higher tone, he thought it would be a good plan to borrow a few hints from other houses. Hitherto they had wasted their time a good deal in talking on trivial matters, and it would be better if they employed their minds on more serious thoughts—thoughts about things going on in the world around. So he proposed instituting a Debating Society after the manner of other Debating Societies. Other houses had—why shouldn't they? He hoped they would help him in his object. And now, Mr. Vernant—Mr. for the occasion—the Secretary, would read the rules.

Mr. Vernant rose to great applause, and proceeded to do so. They were very formal rules, of the style that Pevensey calls "lawyer-like," by which he seems to mean a good many words without any particular meaning, and very imposing. But Mr. Vernant hadn't yet acquired the self-confidence necessary for the fulfilment of his duties, and read the rules too fast, so that there was no time to take them in properly. "However," said Meath, "they are all to be written out in a book towards which we have each paid one shilling, so that we shall be able to study them at our leisure." What seemed to have chiefly impressed Meath was the enormous amount of fines. Meetings to be held at 9.30 p.m. on Saturdays. Meath supposed that was a precaution against their becoming too violent in their debates; "we shall all be tolerably sleepy then." Debates to be put up two at a time and voted for. Subject chosen for the first debate, and to be cogitated over during the week, "Whether it would be desirable for England to annex the North Pole?" put up by the President. The other subject was, "Whether it would be advisable to pursue music more at Eton?" by Mr. Vernant. The Captain and Vernant had elected themselves President and Secretary to start with; but after that it was to be done at the end of every half or "session," as the rules called it, before they went home or "adjourned" for the holidays or

"recess," by "secret voting," which, to imaginative minds like Meath's, suggested something nice and mysterious, such as sitting with one's face muffled up in a cloak in a subdued light, and dropping one's vote into an iron casket to slow music. However, the Debating Society was not to be laughed at. It was to be a great success; everybody said so. They all began to discuss which was the best style of rhetoric; some were for Pitt, some for Canning, &c. As all the more modern orators seemed to have been appropriated, Meath said he would go in for Demosthenes or Cicero. If the affair didn't prosper, it would certainly be no fault of theirs. The others stayed out in the passage talking over it, and furbishing up their rhetorical powers till ever so late. Meath would stop; bed-time forbade; and he had begun to be punctual that very day.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SAP CLUB.

MONDAY came, and after twelve came; the first meeting of the Sap Club was to be held. After twelve on Monday was chosen as a convenient season, as Stortford and Furneaux hadn't been able to get a racket-court, and Pevensey said he had nothing better to do.

The President took his seat on the Windsor chair at ten minutes past twelve. Then he waited. The table and ink were ready; everything was there;—except the members. At a quarter past, the President put his head out of the window to see if he could learn any tidings of the others. He perceived them talking at the door, and accordingly called to them, but they only looked up and nodded and continued their conversation. Presently something occurred to Stortford which he communicated to the others, and they came into the house. The President was of opinion that Stortford was the only one of the club who was blessed with a conscience, be-

sides, he could lecture him all meal times now that he messed with him. The President resumed his seat and waited some minutes more. Presently Stortford appeared with a gradus and dictionary, going to do his verses. So was the President. The club—what there was of it—set to work. * * * * *

Twenty minutes to one. No signs of the others. The President had done three verses. Three verses in ten minutes made twenty-seven in an hour and a half, what was left of after twelve, one more might be effected, and he would have done twenty-eight verses, very nearly a whole copy in one after twelve. Stortford had done three. The President and he agreed to race * * * * *

A sudden scuffle in the passage, then the door burst open, and Furneaux rushed in hotly pursued by Pevensey, with a pile of books between his arms and chin. Furneaux tried to keep Pevensey from getting in at the door, but resistance was vain; Pevensey was the stronger and forced his way in. As he passed the threshold, however, the triumph of his entry was rather marred by his catching his foot in the oilcloth and falling, dropping all his books. He picked them up, flopped them one by one on to the table, much to the detriment of everybody's writing, and, turning to Furneaux, accused him of being the cause of his dropping them. Furneaux indignantly repelled the charge, and a disturbance was on the point of breaking out when the President interfered. Furneaux then went to the window, Pevensey dealt his books round the table like a pack of cards, called attention to the fact that he had on a change coat instead of a black one, because it looked more business-like, and then stood staring, apparently looking at nothing particular, and wrapped in deep meditation. At last—

"Why, there's no chairs."

The President.—"Well, I should have thought you could have found your own chair. Get one from next door, or bellow for a lower boy to find you one."

Pev.—"'Can't possibly trouble to do that. Bunter, you're a very bad president. We shall have to depose you. Look here, Stortford, get off that,—or I know a splendid dodge."

He took the president's chair, turned it on to its face, and then seated himself on the legs and gave the President the back. After this arrangement he occupied himself with chewing a pen, and looking hard at Furneaux's back in silence for about three minutes. Then he spoke—

"Furneaux, I've been looking at you for the last twenty minutes. You're wasting your whole after twelve. Come and begin working instantly, or Bunter will project you from the club."

Furn.—"Bunter'd better try."

Furneaux being about six inches taller than the President, the latter was much of the same opinion.

Pev. (in a fit of loyalty to his superior) "Then I will." He was nearly getting up to do it, when the President, fearing a renewal of hostilities, pacified the zeal of Pevensey, and put the case mildly to Furneaux. "It was getting late, the object of the Club was to Sap, and didn't he think he'd better come and do some work?"

Furn.—"Oh, all right, yes, I'm coming in a minute, only I just wanted to see—there's such a rummy thing down here in the street."

Pev. (with his curiosity excited,) "No, *is* there? What is it?" He jumped up to ascertain, and as a matter of course down went the President's part of the chair, and that worthy officer was thrown violently on to the floor. Pevensey picked him up tenderly like an infant and subjected him to the most undignified treatment, "rubbing the place to make it well," &c., until it became not only painful to the feelings but to the senses as well. He also thought it necessary to accompany his caresses with such little soothing remarks as nurses make to children. And this to his President. Meath complained that "this seemed to be going to be the way this half."

Everybody had grown so but himself in the holidays, and they all tried to patronize him and treat him as if he were a baby.

However, on its coming at last to Pevensey saying, "Ny, ny zen, dont'se zen, ze little zing mustn't lose its little temper zemper zen," the President felt it was too much, and rose to his full dignity and called on Furneaux to come and work. Furneaux was evidently awed and removed his books to the table, and then *he* stood looking about for a chair. On his remarking on the absence of such an article, Pevensey expressed a desire to know who had said that there was one there, and took upon himself to order him to get a seat for himself. Furneaux, however, saw doing that no more than Pevensey had, and his way out of the difficulty was to pull the President's easy-chair from its corner and sit on the arm, quieting the owner's anxiety for the safety of his already rather rickety furniture by the assurance that he wasn't particular and didn't mind sitting on a broken chair at all.

The ingenuity of this expedient, however, so moved Pevensey's envy, that he jumped up to eject Furneaux, on the ground that as first comer he had most right to the newly discovered seat. When the President had recovered the suddenness of Pevensey's rise, he was only just in time to prevent the old feud from breaking out again by settling that Pevensey should have the Windsor chair, Furneaux the arm-chair, and Stortford should share the ottoman with himself. Matters were thus amicably arranged, and the Sap Club settled to work at 1.5 p.m.

1.10 p.m.—Pevensey's equilibrium (equanimity?) was disturbed by Furneaux giving as a reason for his looking at him that he was seeking inspiration. He begged that he would make his researches for that article somewhere else, as it interrupted him very much. He was very modest, and found it necessary for him to hide his face behind a book. Pevensey and Furneaux had all this time been apparently trying

which could devour most quill pen within a stated time. Furneaux had managed half-a-one, while Pevensey was about three-quarters of the way through his. Stortford, ever since he had settled to work, had, during all these interruptions, been patiently mugging on at his verses, and had got twelve done. The President had only perpetrated five—the average was rather going down. But peace again reigned. The proceedings looked more hopeful.

1.20 p.m.—*Furn.* (breaking silence).—"Well, I never. How on earth, I should like to know, do they expect a fellow to make a couple of verses out of this:—

—'A simple child
That lightly draws its breath'?"

Pev. (only too eager to do anybody's work but his own).—"Oh! can't you enlarge that. Why, it's as easy as pot. Say, Now behold the little child as yet tender and unversed in all the dire—bring dire in always, it's a capital word—dire, fraud and cunning—*fraude doloque*, you know—splendid ending for a long verse—of the men who walk about in the fields and towns of this—ur, something world—how does it go on?—oh, say, that with bounding heart, free from all care, inhales the pure blasts of the sky (flamina pura poli). I say, I'm rather good at Latin verses. I don't mind doing your verses if you'll do some of this stuff for me. I wish to goodness I'd never joined the Army Class. See what they've given me to do now, a great essay on Political Economy. I wish you'd change, Furneaux."

Furneaux, however, didn't seem to see, and made an effort to get on with his verses.

1.30 p.m.—The clock struck. "Hullo," exclaimed Furneaux, "there's the half hour, and I haven' done a verse. I *must* get on."

Pev.—"The half hour? Bless me!" (clapping the Presi-

dent on the back), "Time for biscuits! Bunter! where's those biscuits?"

The President did not answer, but Pevensey only persevered and thumped louder:

"Bunter, I say, where's those biscuits?"

The Pres.—"You don't deserve any, and there are none if you did. Get on with your work, and don't disturb us any more. I'm sure you've interrupted us quite enough for one morning."

Pev. (adopting an injured tone).—"Oh, but I say, how can you expect a fellow to sap without biscuits? And did you ever see anything like this essay? I've never done one before; how can they suppose I can begin it now? I wish you'd show me. If they must give us English composition why don't they give us rhymes? I'm sure I could write very beautiful rhymes"—

Here the President interrupted him with the advice that at present, as he hadn't got rhymes but a prose essay to write, he had better confine his attention to the latter style of composition.

Pevensey took a bit of paper and a new pen, wrote his name at the top, and then suddenly appearing inspired, began writing, making an occasional alteration, and smiling to himself all the time. Quiet for about ten minutes. "At last," sighed the President to himself, and settled down again to his own work, when—

Pev.—"Look here, Bunter, what do you think of this for English poetry? It's an ode to you;

> I love little Bunter, his coat is so warm,
> And if I don't hurt him I'll do him no harm,
> I'll give him some hay, and say, 'Proceed,
> Gee up, Bunter.'"

The Pres.—"I think it's great rot. Besides, it isn't original. Go on with your essay."

Pev.—"That shows you're no judge of poetry. What do you think of it, Furneaux? How many verses have you done? And you, Stortford, wake up. Why, I declare, I believe you haven't spoken a word all the morning."

Everybody (getting exasperated).—"Well, supposing you shut up yourself! Hold your row, can't you?"

Pev.—"Dear, dear, what a rise we're all in. I never knew such an unsociable lot. Well, I suppose I must do something about this beastly essay. Tell us how to begin, Bunter, and then I can get on by myself."

The Pres. (only too glad to see any sign of Pevensey's getting to work).—"Well, I suppose you ought to say what Political Economy is, to begin with."

Pev. (taking a new bit of paper).—"Oh yes, I see. Well (writes) '*Political Economy is—*'"

The Pres.—"Or perhaps it would be better, '*Political Economy may be defined as—*'"

Pev.—"Oh yes, that's splendid. Bunter, you're a oner at Essays, who taught you?" (writing on a third piece of paper "'*Political Economy may be defined as*'—; or, look here what do you say to this, '*may be more clearly and statis tically*,' is it *statistically* or *systematically*, Bunter?"

The Pres. (having started Pevensey on the right road, had returned to his own work, and wasn't thinking any more about him).—"Oh, anything."

Pev.—"'*Systematically defined as.*' No, hang it, there are too many scratch-outs. I'll begin again." (Producing a fourth sheet of paper). "Now then; '*When we inquire into the subject of Political Economy we may observe that it may be more clearly and systematically defined as*'—; I say, what is Political Economy, Bunter?"

Everybody (getting tired of his reporting progress in this manner).—"Why on earth can't you keep your Political Economy to yourself?"

Pev.—"I can't. I don't know what Political Economy is

I always thought Economy meant saving candles and soap, and all that sort of thing. Does Political Economy mean doing that on a large scale? Besides, if it comes to my keeping my work to myself I should like to know what's the good of a Sap Club if one doesn't give the others the benefit of one's work."

The President here became desperate, seized one of Pevensey's books, ran through it, found a chapter on Political Economy, and gave it to him, who grunted acknowledgment, and set to work to copy a paragraph of introductory remarks straight out of the book, until he had covered four pages of paper, utterly regardless of whether it was relevant to his subject, but making up in quantity what was deficient in quality. Meanwhile, Stortford, whose powers of application under difficulties excited the admiration of the President, had finished his eighteenth verse, the President had done twelve, while Furneaux, to whom the flow of inspiration had not gone as quickly as it might, was sitting looking up to the ceiling, and jotting down odd ideas and fragmentary verses with the blanks filled up with "Tum-tiddy, tum-tiddy, tum," by way of a step towards their completion.

1.50 p.m.—Stortford looked up for the first time and asked for the blotting paper. He was immediately called to order by Pevensey for disturbing the community by talking, though he nevertheless, the next minute, having finished his essay to his own satisfaction, with great triumph and a flourish and a large blot into the bargain, announced it as his opinion that the Club wasn't a bad notion, only that the others were so unsociable and wouldn't talk.

Then all the members began to clear away their things. Stortford having done most had most, reason to be proud, but Furneaux sneered at his success and expressed a wish that Stortford only had *his* work to do, and he would be much more deserving of credit for his perseverance. Pevensey then thought he merited some praise for his share of the

sapping, and to make it perfect he asked some one to recommend him a motto to stick at the top of the Essay, "to please the old man." Stortford being rather elated, and in a facetious mood, recommended "Write me down an ass," and had to flee before Pevensey's wrath. Then Pevensey thought "Honi soit qui mal y pense" would be applicable, but he couldn't make up his mind, so the motto was given up.

Then he told Furneaux to leave off sapping and get ready for dinner; likewise the President; he couldn't have the Club brought to shame by any one being late for dinner. He kicked the table to rouse the President, who was just putting the last touch to a verse, and this put it into his head what a nice thing it would be to hold a *séance à la* Maskelyne and Cooke, which he did immediately, with Furneaux as assistant medium. The table rocked and heaved, the President only just saved the inkpot in time; the table cover and all the books slipped on to the floor, while kicks and thumps—the spirit rappings, explained Pevensey—were heard underneath the table, and just as the dinner bell rang, the spirits waxed very violent, the whole affair turned over and the *media* fled, leaving the President to survey the wreck.

Pevensey was the only one of the Club late for dinner.

CHAPTER VIII.

BEAGLING EXPERIENCES.

IT was Wednesday after twelve, and a stiff, not to say rigid form might have been seen lying in an arm-chair in one of the tutors' houses at Eton; it was Meath. As to expressing his feelings by saying that he had swallowed a poker—oh no, it was much worse than that, he felt as if he'd swallowed a whole set of fire-irons, fender included. He had never felt so miserable in his life. He had been able to do nothing at all after twelve, but sit in his arm-chair with his legs on the

mantel-piece and groan. Everybody had been very kind to him in the way of giving advice ; Pevensey had been recommending him to get somebody to work his limbs round and round like a coffee-mill to wear some of the stiffness off, and had even offered to do it for him, but he had declined. So they had all gone out and left him to his misery, "and it's about the kindest thing they can do," said Meath.

If he was always going to be in this state after going out hunting, he made up his mind that he would certainly begin to make negotiations for getting his subscription returned and eschewing the pleasures of the chase. He knew plenty of fellows who would be glad to occupy his vacancy. He had thought that he would enjoy the beagles, but—oh !—and —oh ! !—and these were the consequences of pleasure !

For he had been out with the beagles for the first time the day before. He had been in a great state of excitement about it, as it was to be his maiden run—he didn't feel quite so excited now, though—and he felt rather proud of being so energetic, and of taking so much interest in common occupations, contrary to his usual custom. Ah, by-the-bye, that reminded him it would be a very good opportunity for writing a letter home, where he supposed they would be expecting one. He had been back a week and with all these great reforms looked for, they would be wanting to know how they were getting on. And he could write it sitting in his arm-chair if he put a book on his lap.

He raised himself to hobble across the room to get out his writing materials. Oh ! what agony it was to move ! He had been in that state all the morning. When he woke up at first he thought that he must have become paralyzed in the night, and he lay for some time thinking over how he should occupy himself for the rest of his life in that case. But then he found he could move with some difficulty, and a great struggle ensued in himself as to whether he should get up at all. His interior, that is, his mind, wanted to get

up, while his exterior, that is, his body, wanted to stop in bed; but finally virtue triumphed, and he rolled himself out of bed on to the floor, then raised himself from a horizontal to a perpendicular position by the aid of the knobs of the bureaux drawers, and other convenient holding-places, and when he had got so far he sat on the edge of the bed and deliberated whether he should not send down to stay out after all. But he reflected that the only excuse he could give would be that he was very stiff from the effects of the beagles, and that the authorities might say that it was his own fault, and nobody asked him, and so he might get into their bad books; and he didn't want to do that as he had kept out of them so far. So he struggled into his clothes by dint of hanging them up to the furniture and slipping into them off the table, and such like expedients, for bending was out of the question, and then went downstairs like a monkey, clinging to the balustrade, and causing a block of fellows who were in a hurry and not in the same condition as himself. For the odd thing was that he seemed to be the only sufferer from beagles, which made him afraid that there must be something wrong in his construction, and that he was doomed to be always in this wretched condition. Perhaps, though, it was because the others had been hunting and all that sort of thing in the holidays, while he had only been vegetating in London.

But now for this letter. He had got his materials, and returned to his former position. This must be a letter of a superior sort, not one of the ordinary home ones, beginning "*I hope you are quite well*," and ending "*Good-bye, I remain*," with nothing particular in between, but now he must go in for a higher stamp of thing altogether, to show the people at home how he was improving. He would give them a full and particular account of his run with the beagles, so that they might see that he was really taking interest in his sports, a thing they were always rowing at him

about. He had a Complete Letter Writer somewhere, but he was afraid it didn't contain an epistle from a person who was stiff from the effects of running with the beagles. No, this must be a purely original composition.

To begin; "*Dear*"— He didn't think he would write to anybody in particular, as he believed they all squabbled at home over his letters if he didn't happen to recollect to write to each exactly in turn. Now if they were so anxious to be honoured by his communications, they could tear the letter up and each take a fragment. Then he supposed he must put in the stock *formulæ:*

"*I hope you are all quite well,*"

That was only civil;

"*I myself am as well as may be expected.*"

That perhaps might make them think he was pining away for want of home;—contrariwise, perhaps it mightn't.

"*The weather here has been fine with the exception of some rain.*"

That didn't compromise him; not that there could have been much difference between the weather at Eton and London, though. But now for the more serious part of the letter;

"*I went out yesterday for the first time with the beagles, and we had a very good run. The master this year is a very skilful one, and has brought the pack up to a greater state of proficiency than it has ever been before.*"

That looked as if he knew a good deal about it and would help to impress his people largely. But now he must begin to be careful and not make any slips. For, to tell the truth, Meath knew nothing about hunting, having nothing of that sort in his part of the country, except rats.

"*A great many of my tutor's fellows subscribe and we were all very eager about it yesterday.*"

Meath, as already said, had been very eager himself, and had begun talking about it directly he sat down to dinner,

and incurred a good deal of chaff by his enthusiasm. At least he thought Stortford must have meant it for chaff, as when he was holding forth on the delights of the chase, Stortford pretended to enter fully into all his views and asked him in the most innocent manner if he thought he was likely to get the brush. Of course he was down on him in an instant for being such a Cockney. Why, even he, who had scarcely ever seen a live hare, knew that they didn't have brushes. Stortford was not in the least ashamed of his ignorance, however, but merely said, oh, he'd heard of a hare-brush, and smiled inanely at his boots. Meath strongly suspected he was trying to have a laugh at his expense. He would tax him with it at tea that evening, and if he confessed, it should be laid up with the rest of the stock of insults payable-out when Meath took to growing and caught him up. Stortford was not going to do just as he liked because he happened to have grown two inches in the holidays. Meath's turn would come next and then Stortford would see!

He gave up Stortford as hopeless and tried to draw Pevensey out on the subject. But it was useless ever trying to get *him* to say anything at dinner; he bestowed all his innate impetuosity on his victuals, and attended to nothing else for the time being. So Meath had to give him up too, and subsided into a sort of *reverie* in which he drew vivid pictures of himself soaring over lofty fences and otherwise distinguishing himself in the hunting-field till he found himself carried away into the middle of an exciting run, and suddenly woke up as it were exclaiming "Hoop-la! over there!" in an audible voice, which made every one turn round to see what he was at. As he then felt that his behaviour was verging on the ridiculous, he had to keep guard over his excited nerves during the rest of dinner.

But to return to the letter. "*The meet was at Datchet Cross Roads, and of course we changed before absence, and started immediately after we were called.*"

Meath had been dreadfully afraid of being late for absence, so he began to change directly after dinner, and rude fellows who weren't going to run themselves annoyed him by coming into his room and criticizing his calves in the most personal manner while he was putting on his stockings. When he was ready, there was about a quarter of an hour to spare, so he put on a high hat and great coat and went down to exhibit himself at the door, and keep up the honour of the house by showing the world how energetic they were at his tutor's. But there were a lot of other fellows there before him, which rather detracted the public attention from him.

When the clock struck, they all started in a body to absence. The weather was exceedingly mild, and to any uninitiated stranger their appearance must have been odd, to say the least of it. Eight fellows, two and two, in long great coats, with the collars turned up; no nervous mamma could have taxed them with not taking care of themselves; they might have been a convalescent hospital out for a holiday.

Meath had his lower boy waiting round the corner to take his hat and coat, and then he started for the happy hunting-grounds at Datchet Cross Roads. He ran all the way to the meet with Thamer, in his division, and they were both tolerably pumped when they got there; but there was no time for rest; they had to start immediately. This was recorded in the letter; "*and arrived just as the hounds threw off.*"

Meath knew "threw off" was the right expression; he had seen it somewhere—in the *Field*, he thought. The master told them to spread out across a field, and they went through it, but found nothing there. "*Having tried*"—"tried," he knew, was all right—"*one field in vain, we took a fence*"—at least, if "took" means "jump," the other fellows "took" it, but Meath had no great faith in his saltatory powers, and he had no particular desire to fall on his head, so he selected a place which looked rather thinner than the rest, and went

through it, and "took" away a good deal of it in his knickerbockers as a *souvenir*—"*which was a regular rasper*"—this looked grand; "rasper" was a very sporting word; *he* meant that it scratched a good deal, and he was sure it would have a great effect on his people—"*and drew a very heavy ploughed field.*"

No, it was a "stiff plough" in accounts of runs; *and drew a stiff plough, but still failed to find.*" Meath began to think that if beagling was always like this, it must be rather slow, and when they had got to the middle of the third field he had almost given up all hope of seeing a hare that day, and was listening to Thamer's endeavours at consolation by arguing that it was absurd to expect to find any hares in this benighted country, but Meath should just come down to his (Thamer's) home in Yorkshire, &c.,—when up jumped something close to his feet, and started away across country at the rate of seventy miles an hour.

"*However, when we got to the middle of the third field a hare got up,*"—ought one to talk of a hare "getting up," or was it only of partridges and pheasants? Meath didn't quite know,—"*and in an instant everybody,*" no—"*the whole field was in motion.*"

The suddenness of the animal's appearance had given Meath quite a turn at first, but when he had recovered from the severe shock, and was beginning to get back his breath, it occurred to him that this must be the hare, and that he ought to do something. But he was in a most dreadful fright lest he should do the wrong thing, and while he was deliberating whether he should give vent to a true sporting "Tally-ho!" or merely confine himself to a mild "Hi!" he could only stand stock-still, with one arm stuck straight out in an imbecile manner in the direction that the hare had taken. Before he could make up his mind, the others had seen her too, and off they all started at a run, and there was a general bustle and confusion. Meath got

furiously excited; was literally not sure for the next few minutes if he was on his head or his heels as he went stumbling on over the plough; all he knew was that he had to run, and run he did. "*The hare was a very good one, and gave us a capital run across some very difficult country.*"

Meath was never much of an athlete, not particularly swift of foot, and owns to a habit of taking two or three looks before he leaps, if he can't circumvent the obstacle some other way. The result was that he didn't find it such an easy task running with the beagles, as they went at such a furious pace. Running *after* them was quite another thing. *Still* he stuck to it like a Briton, occasionally cheered by hearing their sounds some way on ahead, and hoping for a check, in which case he might come up with them. But this was a particularly aggravating hare, and she didn't go in for checks.

"*Without a single check,*" ran the letter—

And Meath was beginning to feel rather distressed, but was encouraged by seeing that he was not quite alone in that field, and that some fellows had given up altogether, and were climbing to the top of fences and the like, to get a view of the run from there.

Meath had a soul above fences; that wasn't hunting, so he struggled on manfully for two more fields and despised their want of energy. But when he perceived that he was really the last except those who weren't running at all, he began to think that he must be presenting rather an insane appearance to any casual observer, stumbling along as he was with no apparent object in view, and as he was getting rather done and the first excitement was beginning to wear off a bit—well, he thought there might be something in it after all, so he got on the top of a gate, and peered about. It was at the top of a bit of rising ground, and he got a magnificent view of the hounds about

three fields off, pegging along as hard as they could go. This went down in the letter—

"*However, I managed to see a good deal of the run,*" without entering into details—

"*And was one of the first in at the death.*"

All facts. As Meath watched the hounds they suddenly turned at right angles, and then again, and he perceived the hare coming straight at him. Then he began to feel nervous again. He wasn't sure if he ought to run for his life or if he had better sit still in the hope of the hare not seeing him, because one never knows what a hunted animal mayn't do when it is driven to bay. He had just decided on the latter course when, as she came within fifty yards of him, the hounds caught her and she was no more. He ran up from the other side to the Master, and so when the other fellows came up later after having plodded round the whole way, he felt himself in a position to make sarcastic remarks on their lateness. It was his turn to be arrogant then, and take his revenge for their taunts about his growth. They could say nothing against his superiority in the hunting-field.

"*There was no time to draw again, so we returned home to lock up, and 'to fight our battles o'er again.'*"

Meath was very proud of this quotation. In plain English, it meant that the evening was spent in his room recounting experiences, Meath himself coming out strong as an authority, owing to his having been one of the first in at the death. He neglected to say anything about the gate, however.

But it was getting near dinner time, and the letter must be finished.

"*I don't think I have any more to say, so will end with best love to all, and believe me, &c., &c.*"

There it was done! and shut up. Now, whom to direct it to? He couldn't put "*To the Meath family*" outside. No,

it must be to his sister, and the squabbles would take place after all.

But this was a perfect letter—a letter to be preserved among the annals of the Meath family, and to be produced in evidence of his energy when enthusiastic lady friends asked after "that dear Eton Boy." Meath was proud of this letter—the first production of his reformation. Something had inspired him to write it. He stamped it, crawled downstairs, and posted it. * * * * * *

And there! he had forgotten to say a word about his work, and now his people would think he was relapsing into bad ways, and giving up too much time to play. Dear! did anybody ever see such luck? Now he would have to write another letter after all.

CHAPTER IX.

FIVES.

MEATH was never very much of a fives' player, and was not one of those fellows who seem to depend for their exercise during the fives' half on religiously running down to the courts, whether they get out of school early or late, on the very stray chance of getting a place. Yet, when his division did happen to get let out of school ten minutes earlier, and a chance was given him to get a court, he thought it very hard that another master should have let out his division even earlier than that, and so spoilt that chance. And it was the third time this half, too. Meath couldn't run very fast—too stout, his enemies said—so that all the places got filled up before he arrived, and he returned to his tutor's very much out of breath, and thinking over in his mind what an absurd system the whole one of fives' was. The masters ought to let their divisions out in turn, so as to give every one the chance of a fives' court. Eighteen fives' courts

gave occupation for just seventy-two fellows, one-thirteenth of the school, and what were the other twelve-thirteenth's to do with their leisure after twelve? And yet complaints were made of the vast amount of loafers in the Easter Half.

Meath was always a strong Conservative, and a great stickler for upper-boy rights, and, in his opinion, the fives' courts were a great cause of making lower boys forget themselves. Even if a lower boy did get out of school before his superiors, it showed great want of respect on his part to go and secure a fives' court. They presumed too much on the upper boy's lenity. Besides, why couldn't some of them play on the Chapel buttresses? They seemed to forget that they were once the only fives' courts that existed; and surely what was good enough for their fifth form grandfathers was good enough for them as lower boys. They ought to consider it an honour to be allowed to play on the very spot where fives were invented.

Altogether, Meath was very indignant about it, and was meditating giving vent to his feelings in the *Chronicle*. Not that it would produce any effect; letters to the *Chronicle* never do unless written about four halves before the grievance happens; but he thought perhaps it might have the effect of sowing the seeds of good for a future generation, so he began, "*Dear Sir, it is with no selfish motive, but only in my sincere anxiety to benefit posterity,*"—he hoped they would see the biting sarcasm.

Pevensey came in here, and wanted to know what he was doing. When Meath told him, he was immensely taken with the idea, and offered to help him. He proposed that Meath should sign it as A. P. E., as "it would be so appropriate." "Hang it," said Meath, "do you mean to insult me?" Oh, no, Pevensey had only meant it for A Present Etonian.

Somebody knocked at the door. "Oh, come in, pray, don't be shy," said Pevensey. Meath wished Pevensey would be more careful how he said those sort of things. He once

roared that out, and it turned out to be his dame, and she thought it was Meath who had answered her knock. This time, however, it happened only to be a small lower boy, who took off his hat, and stood in the doorway gasping and gesticulating. Meath knew this lower boy of old; he came from Mealman in his division. Mealman was a fellow who never kept any memorandum of his work, and so was constantly sending to him with long lists of work that he wanted information about. He was generally behindhand, and seemed in the habit of putting off his work till it accumulated to an immense heap, and then sending to Meath to know what he had to do, and polishing it all off at once, and then beginning accumulating again; something in the same way as Pevensey. He always sent this same lower boy, who stammered, and at first a good deal of time used to be spent before Meath could get at what his mission was; but now he had got pretty used to his messages, and could generally judge of Mealman's requirements by remembering the day of the week. This being Tuesday, it was most probable that he wanted the Sunday Questions, Sunday Questions being rightly shown up on Monday morning.

The lower boy stood and wagged his head about. Then the catch gave way partly, and he began—"M—m—m—m;' Meath saw no use wasting any more time, so said, "Oh! yes, Mealman wants the Sunday Questions, I suppose," and went to his bureau to see if he could find them. Something dreadful seemed to be going to happen to the lower boy. He waved his hands in despair and jumped about, till he at last loosened some of the machinery that had caught, and he almost shrieked, "Nun—nun—nun—no! M—m—m—mealm—m—man wants to know—nun—now ef you'd l—ike —a—place—at—fives!" Oh! that was the message, was it? Meath would only be too happy. This was an old agreement between Mealman and himself, that Mealman should give him a place some day, on condition that he should give

Mealman one in return some half holiday when the Captain lent him the court he had by right of sixth form. Coming so late in the day, the invitation seemed rather as if some one had failed Mealman, and that he had only fallen back on Meath as an emergency. Meath felt he had a right to take offence, and say no, but thought perhaps it would be best to accept the chance of playing now he had got it. Yes, he would play.

But the lower boy had evidently been wound up to run some more, and hadn't done. An awful change passed over his countenance; he shrugged and guggled, and made strange noises like a diseased clock. Meath wished Mealman would send some one else; or, at any rate, why couldn't he write his messages down? The lower boy was going to have an epileptic fit. Pevensey moved towards the washing-stand. He evidently was thinking of the water-jug.

Click! The spring gave way again, and out came some more. "And kukukukan you gugugugugeт ssssssome one—else?" He seemed to want to say some more, but Meath was fearful of the consequences, so he wouldn't let him. Could he get somebody else? Well, Furneaux and Stortford were playing rackets, he knew, and—he looked at Pevensey. Now it wasn't as if it was his own fives' court; then he wouldn't mind; but being there only on sufferance, he didn't like to introduce any one who might spoil the game. He was not a particularly good player himself. He knew that Mealman had only asked him for mercenary motives, with a view to another game in *prospectu;* but as for Pevensey, he could never remember having seen him play, and if he should turn out a bad player, why, he would feel responsible.

Pevensey guessed at his thoughts. "I'll play," he said. It seemed rather hard on him. Meath didn't like to be rude and say he would prefer seeing first if he could find some one better, so he put it to Pevensey in his straightforward fashion. "Pevensey, can you play?" Pevensey

laughed scornfully; "Play, bless you, yes, you should just see me; why, the other day I and Chermont and two other fellows had a bully that lasted seventeen minutes by college clock, bang off."

If that was the case—well, then Pevensey must be one of the best players in the school. Meath had seen matches between fellows that were generally considered good, and he had known a bully last nearly three minutes; but seventeen! —No more need be said; he felt after that he must accept Pevensey's offer. "All right," he told the lower boy, "say we'll be down in half a minute. New fives' courts, I suppose." He knew Mealman's soul was above the old fives' courts. The lower boy nodded; he evidently saved his exertions till absolutely necessary; then he went.

Meath told Pevensey to look sharp and change as it was getting late, and proceeded to do the same himself. He found somebody had borrowed his fives' shoes, and had to go in search of them, but not very far, as he found Pevensey in the very act of putting them on. He had nothing to say in his defence except something about "absence of mind," his usual excuse for all offences. Then he had to go and seek some one else's, as he hadn't got a pair of his own yet. "Had no time this half," he said. Meath would have liked to have known what had been occupying him so much. He got changed long before Pevensey, and ran down to the fives' court, where he found Mealman knocking about a ball with Doubleston at his tutor's, and waiting for him and Pevensey.

Doubleston was the sort of fellow who was very particular about his games and made every one feel on their good behaviour when he played with them; there was no frivolity in playing with him. Being very good at fives himself, he always seemed to be offended if every one didn't keep up to his standard. In fact, there was really something serious in playing with him, and Meath began to feel qualms about Pevensey. He knew he could just keep out of Doubleston's

bad books by showing him he was really trying all he could, but he knew Pevensey's disposition ; he might do anything extraordinary, and then he (Meath) would feel the culprit. Doubleston was already rather put out by having been kept waiting, and asked in a half surly sort of tone how long "that other fellow" was going to be. Meath made apologies for Pevensey's tardiness, and Doubleston only grunted ; perhaps he thought the more. They spent the interval before Pevensey's arrival in knocking up the ball with no particular rule, to "get their eye in," but it was in silence ; *some one* was out of temper.

After some time Pevensey appeared, having at last managed to find some one's shoes, but they were about a size and a half too large and rather impeded his movements than otherwise. He was not in the least ashamed of having kept the others waiting—on the contrary, he seemed rather proud of it. He came on to the court with a burst like the clown into a circus ring, caught Meath a playful smack with his fives' glove and nodded familiarly to the other two. He put his being late down to the mutability of human affairs ; "We must all change," he said. Mealman smiled, evidently regarding him as a harmless sort of idiot. Doubleston said in a disdainful and pointed manner, "Now we'd better begin."

Mealman took Meath on his side ; Doubleston took Pevensey ; they placed themselves, and the game began. Goodness only grant that Pevensey mightn't take it into his head to play the fool !

Doubleston was in. He served to Mealman, who returned the ball to him. Doubleston managed to get it up, and for the next few cuts the playing was all between him and Mealman, while Pevensey and Meath stood waiting for the ball to be hit down to them. At last Mealman got it away down to Pevensey ; Pevensey extended both arms wildly, as if he were going to embrace it, shouted, fell upon it, and

missed it, thereby putting Doubleston out. Doubleston gave him a look, but Pevensey didn't mind; he took it all as a matter of course, and tried to cheer Doubleston up by saying, "All right, old fellow, you'll do the same for me presently, I daresay," as if he had rather benefited Doubleston than otherwise.

Then Mealman went in, and by dint of Doubleston's rushing about and getting up all Pevensey's cuts as well as his own, and exerting himself to an almost superhuman extent, he managed to get Mealman out without scoring; Meath followed, but his career was short; then Doubleston, then Pevensey, but still no one scored. Pevensey, not content with playing so badly, now took upon himself to grumble at the slowness of the game; Doubleston only looked at him as if he thought he wasn't worth noticing.

At last the spell was broken by Mealman, and then the scoring went on livelily. The game was really between Doubleston and Mealman, and Pevensey and Meath did the looking on for the most part. The others didn't seem to let them have a cut, if they could possibly help.

Fives requires a great deal of skill at Eton. It doesn't only want to be able to knock a ball against a wall, but there are all sorts of awkward ledges that baulk one by throwing the ball about into places where one isn't expecting it, so that when one is waiting for it to come down in one place, it suddenly seems to give a twist and a bound, and jump off into quite another direction. It requires a tremendously quick eye to be able to play well; some fellows have it; Meath hasn't. Besides the ledges, there is in the Eton fives' court an awful invention called the pepper-box. Meath doesn't suppose that it really does, but it certainly seems as if it was always shifting itself into places where it isn't wanted, and hindering one from getting at the ball—at least, whenever *he* plays, he always seems to be coming in contact with it, to the serious detriment of his body and nasal organ.

Still, if he can manage to keep himself from getting entangled with pepper-box, which utterly does for him always, and provided the ball hits the wall full and fair, so that it doesn't make any *very* extraordinary gyrations before it comes to him, he can generally manage to keep himself out of disgrace; and sometimes—but only sometimes—he can manage by a great fluke to make a good shot at the ball as it wanders about in its erraticisms, and thereby gain great praise for his skill, so that altogether he ranks somewhere about the fourth-rate players who play for the sake of occupation without making a sort of lesson of it. But, as for Pevensey, his aim on this particular morning was apparently to make himself as ridiculous as he could while playing. When the ball came to him, he leapt at it wildly, and plunged about into everybody, and up against the wall, swinging himself about like a perambulating windmill, and accompanying his performance with shouts to the others to "look out," which warnings were perhaps not altogether unnecessary; and if he *did* get up a cut, he seemed as if he were going mad with triumph. He kept finding himself after his rushes in extraordinary positions up in the corners, and he got in everybody's way generally. Meath said that if he had been playing with him by himself he would have felt inclined to laugh, and Mealman was more amused than angry; but there was Doubleston with his wet blanket, and they felt they must be serious.

Pevensey didn't mind, however: he went on in the same violent manner all through the game, and remarked on how dull the others were: he complained that they were all playing as if they were at a funeral. "Let's be lively," he said. Meath would have liked to have been lively, but he looked at Doubleston, and felt he couldn't.

At last the game was over, Meath's side winning, which only made Doubleston look blacker than ever. Meath felt proud; he could never remember having won a game before.

Doubleston and Mealman were thirsty, so went to get some lemonade: Pevensey and Meath stopped in charge of the court. Meath took the opportunity of speaking to Pevensey on his behaviour. But he seemed to look upon it as if he was the injured party in having been induced to come and play with Mealman and Doubleston. "Those fellows think they can play," he said; "they can't hit a bit; they're afraid of hurting their fingers; I'll show them how to hit."

When the other two came back, new sides were chosen. Mealman took Pevensey, and Meath went on Doubleston's side. Mealman wasn't always where the ball was, like Doubleston; and so Pevensey had more opportunity of showing off his fancy play.

The first cut that came to him he hit off court altogether; the next two he hit over the wall into the next court; even Mealman began to lose patience. He picked up the ball when the indignant occupants of the next court had thrown it back for the second time, held it for a moment, pointed to the wall of the court they were playing in and said, rather sarcastically, "The object of the game, Pevensey, is to aim at this wall, if you please," and then threw the ball to him without vouchsafing him another word. Pevensey said, "All right, old 'oss, d'you suppose I don't know where to aim as well as you?" and then the very next cut he drove straight into Mealman's eye. Mealman was rendered *hors de combat* for some time; Pevensey was very sorry, he said, but was sure Mealman's head wasn't there when he hit the ball, and tried to prove it by declaring he took particular care to aim in a direction so that it should bound where Doubleston couldn't get at it. He offered to go and get some lemonade to bathe Mealman's eye, as he had heard that lemonade was a very good thing for bad eyes; he was most awfully sorry, but he was sure it wasn't his fault.

Mealman didn't feel equal to going on playing and Doubleston was too disgusted, so they went after Meath had

thanked them for the place. Pevensey and he stopped on a little longer for a single game, but Pevensey would go on humbugging, and, now he had got Meath to himself, was worse than ever. He got up cuts at about the sixteenth bound, and then declared in the most barefaced manner that they were all right. Then he appealed to some bystander, who he had previously made sure was not looking, to support his statement; and if Meath remonstrated with the said bystander on the ground that he didn't see, Pevensey said, "Well, what if he didn't, he's all the more likely to give an impartial opinion." Meath said that he never knew Pevensey so perverse as on that morning, just the very morning of all others when he wanted him to behave himself. He had spoilt any chance Meath had of ever getting a place from Mealman again; and as for Doubleston, he knew he'd never forgive him.

CHAPTER X.

BIBLIOTHECAL RESEARCHES.

I THINK as far as I can remember that Meath has come back every half with the full resolution of doing something grand in the athletic line; he says his sisters "hound him on to it all the holidays;" but his heart and soul are never in his games as those of some fellows are, and he cannot persuade himself, as they seem to do, that the one and only object of coming to Eton is to be good at games, and so the usual result of all his ambition of becoming very athletic and winning lots of pots is, that after the first fortnight or so he gives it up as a bad job, resigns himself to the fact that nature has destined him for glory by means of his head and not his hands, gives up athletics as a duty, and makes them only a recreation, and in fact, returns entirely to his old ways.

But he felt last half that though this was the case, and though he could not do anything to keep up the honour of

the house by winning lots of the school prizes, as the other fellows were going to do, still he might do something to raise its standard, though in a less conspicuous way. The house had a library, and was rather proud of it, and Meath took a great interest in the measures that were taken to improve it. A large consignment of books came down from London, and he offered his services in arranging them, and spent a wet whole-holiday very busily amongst them. He took me into the library when it was finished, and showed me it very proudly, and explained all about it.

Meath's tutor's library is worked by a committee of the first three in the house; the treasurer, who looks after the money; the auditor, who looks after the treasurer; and the secretary, who looks after the auditor; who looks after the secretary I don't know. Next half Meath is going to be auditor, and he was rather looking forward to the time when he would have a voice in the library; as it was, this half he'd been doing a good deal in its service. He had been cutting the numbers on the shelves that afternoon, and had cut his own fingers doing so. It was not every one that could say they had shed their blood in the honour of the house.

They have a very fine stock of books in that library now; theological, sporting, historical, dramatic, poetical, naturally historical, scientific, and novels, in fact, every requisite for a gentleman's boudoir. Meath was going to commence a course of historical reading on the strength of it. First he was going to undertake Darwin's "Origin of Species," so as to get as far back as possible, then he intended to come down gradually through Herodotus, Josephus, Grote's "Greece," Merivale, Gibbon, Dyce's "Modern Europe," and so on, to the present time. About that period he will probably have reached his allotted term of three-score years and ten; but if not, he will consider what course he had better begin next, and notice will be given as to what he decides upon.

They take in weekly and daily papers at Meath's tutor's,

but an early application is advisable, as there are some fellows, Meath wouldn't tell me who—who, when they once get hold of them, never let them go till they have read them right through, advertisements and all.

There is a piano in that library, and occasionally some benefactor will present a bit of music to the house. But no one often plays this music. They prefer their own natural talent when they do play. But the piano is usually out of tune; it is chiefly used for sitting on. Sometimes, when Meath wishes to be alone with his thoughts in the library, he indulges in "God save the Queen." It has a most moving effect on his hearers. When he took me in there he told me that he and Dawtrey had been at two since that very morning, owing to this piano. He had given Dawtrey offence by rushing into the library exclaiming, "Hurray! they've sent some one to tune the old piano at last!" and it was Dawtrey, doing some classical music. Sometimes they get one of their fellows, Linwood, who is rather æsthetically inclined, to sing to them. Meath thinks Linwood sings rather well, only he rather overdoes himself in the face-making and see-sawing part of the business.

But there is no humbug about Meath's house library; it is a very tiptop affair now. They have very stringent rules, and fines to enforce, so that one would have to be very cautious if one belonged to it. Meath always makes a point of reading carefully through all the rules, before he ventures to touch a book, even down to the one about taking the library paper-cutters away, which strikes me as rather superfluous, as there are no library paper-cutters.

Meath's tutor's, and one or two other houses are more blessed than the rest in having these good libraries, but still, even for those who have not a very good house library, there are opportunities for the pursuit of literature. We are not in that benighted state that some people seem to suppose. There is the school library, though I believe there are a

great many fellows who have hardly ever been inside it. Perhaps they despise it, perhaps they don't think about it, or prefer exercising their bodies to their minds. Perhaps, again, it's because they have a vague sort of idea that the library ought to be exclusively reserved for Saps, and that they have no right there. At least, I am sure that was Furneaux's idea. Furneaux had wandered into the school library one day, in the course of his researches after wisdom, and was so pleased with his new discovery that he repeated his visits once or twice, and then came and inflicted a description of his explorations on Meath and myself, while we were trying to puzzle out some very particular work together that I had gone in to get some help with.

"You know, Bunter, I really advise you to go and see the school library"—just as if we had never been there—"even if a fellow doesn't care for reading, there is an awful lot to interest one there. You can spend a very profitable wet afternoon there, I can tell you. Much better than looking out of the window and abusing the weather."

"You speak the words of wisdom," I said, "but Meath and I have work to do just at present. Would you mind waiting till we've done?"

"Oh, all right, yes, I'm going in a minute; I've got a lot to do myself; I only wanted to tell Bunter. You know, you needn't be afraid of the Saps, Bunter. They're a rummy lot, those Saps. I never could understand them; they never seem like anybody else. I believe you're more than half a Sap yourself, Bunter; you'd be all right in the school library. That's the place to go and learn to be a Sap. What is it the travel-books always say?—'in these fastnesses the explorer will have an opportunity of viewing the Sap in a state of nature.' What are you fellows laughing at? Of course, I mean a natural state. I suppose they congregate there because there is no noise there; no football or other palæstric exercises as in the passages at their tutor's."

"All right, I'm going in a minute, I tell you.

"Yes, Bunter, I've been studying the Saps. I want to become one. Saps are very long-suffering. Sometimes a fellow will come into the library and shout, and laugh, and disturb the sanctity of the place. Then the Saps will look up and growl. But that is all. Or sometimes the chandelier jingles, when some frivolously inclined Colleger exercises the fantastic toe in his chamber overhead. Then the Saps cast deprecatory glances upwards. But they do no more. I'm sure it must take a greal deal to excite a Sap, Bunter."

Furneaux evidently regarded the Sap as a kind of wild animal. He wouldn't give either of us time to interrupt, but continued his lecture :—

"All right, half a minute and I shall have done. You know, you go into the library, Bunter, by a lobby. Push open the door, and enter boldly; you don't have to pay anything. If anybody asks questions, stick to it you're in Middle Division, and all will be right. In the lobby there are some rare old Greek inscriptions. If you are fond of Greek inscriptions you may stop and read them—if you can. I've tried and have come to the conclusion that I could write better Greek myself. Let's see—the other things in the lobby are some desks, a few dilapidated birds, and an umbrella-stand. You may or may not leave your umbrella there as you please. But I think it is best to take it in with you, and also don't take off your hat when you first go into the library itself, as it looks as if you were used to the place, and gives you a sort of footing among the Saps. Then put your umbrella in a free and easy manner on one of the tables; only take care that you don't lay it on the wet theme of some Sap who has left it for a moment to seek inspiration. I did the other day, and it made me feel very uncomfortable. If it's a big Sap he will look at you in a way that will make you, if nervous, feel inclined to turn round and flee at once; or if it's a Sap of smaller dimensions you

will feel as if you ought to say something, though you won't exactly know what, to comfort him.

"When you first—all right, shan't be long—when you first enter the library, you will probably disturb a herd of Saps and a slight disturbance will take place among them. They will raise their heads and look at you, and pass significant glances between themselves, as if they were surprised at your coming in. But you needn't be afraid, Bunter. Saps are quite harmless; they are not voracious. What on earth are you smiling at, Bunter?

"Some Saps will be at the tables, some at the fire, but all reading or thinking, and all—what d'you call it—ab—absorbed in silence. Some will be at the tops of ladders, balancing themselves with big books. It's only Saps who can balance themselves like that on the tops of ladders, I'm sure, Bunter. I tried the other day and nearly fell off and hurt myself. It is only to be acquired by long practice.

"Don't interrupt, Bunter, I'm telling you a great deal that is for your good.

"You know, Bunter, you're always an awful funk, and you might be afraid of the Saps getting violent and turning you out. If so, you'd better go and make friends at once with Oakley. Oakley is the presiding genius, the keeper of this den of Saps. Call Oakley Joe, and then they won't know you're a stranger. His name isn't Joseph, you know, Bunter, any more than Giles' at Williams' name is Giles, or half the people whose name one isn't sure about are really Joby.

"Well, Bunter, go up to Oakley and ask him for a book,—any book will do,—it will give you a right to entry to the library. Oakley knows all the books in the library by heart; *I think* he must have read them all. I've tried to stump Oakley by setting him problems of books to work out. I asked him the other day if he thought he could find me a 'Disquisition on the Abuses of Hydro-Sulphate of Chlorine;'

and he immediately went and got down a book that I daresay would have told me all about it.

"Shut up, Bunter, and listen. You've got nothing to do.

"When you first go in, you will see on your right a sort of figure-head concern—a bust, you know, with a kind of fire-guard round it. It is of a fellow in a night-shirt, and its name is Winthrop Mackworth Praed. One of the Saps told me he was a poet. There are some verses on his pedestal. Stop and read them; they may do you good, Bunter. Opposite, with another fire-guard round him, is a statue of Apollo.

"At the end of the Library, next the door, is another statue. Now, I daresay an ignorant fellow like you, Bunter, would think that it is of a gentleman hindered in his dressing by having dropped a shirt stud. But you have a low mind. I know better than that. I've seen the real thing at Rome, when I went there with my people last year. It's called the dying Gladiator. You know, Bunter, it's the right thing to stand in front of it and say something about 'his being able to tell many a tale of plundered houses, etc.,' if he could speak. At least that's the right remark when you see the real statue. This is only a plaster cast, but I daresay the remark will do as well.

"There are two globes by the dying Gladiator. You may twirl these round if you like. Perhaps if you do you may make the Saps think you have come in to learn geography, and cause them to be less irritated with you.

"At the other end of the library is the fire-place. This is generally surrounded by Saps, so that if you are nervous, as I know you are, Bunter, you had better not approach too near, but study its beauties from a respectful distance. There are angels, and arms, and other decorations. They look as if they were carved, but if tapped they show that they are only plaster. Some one has tapped them, and tapped some of the angels' noses off.

"There are pictures at the Library. There is one over each

of the doors. One is of Henry VI. and the other isn't;—I forget who it is just at present, but I daresay you can go and see for yourself. Over the fire-place is a picture of the immortal Porson. Porson isn't much of a fellow to look at—I should have said he was a very ignorant man—ignorant of the use of the hair brush. At the other end of the room, near Apollo, is a copy of Porson's verses in a long roll, reaching from the top to the bottom of the room. What a sensation it would create, Bunter, if we were to show up our verses in school like that now! They call this Porson's Bacchus. Perhaps he was a votary of Bacchus; that may account for his dishevelled appearance in his portrait.

"Of course the chief part of the contents of the Library consists of books. There are rules about taking out these books, and authorities to see that these rules are carried out. But I can't tell you who these authorities are; they are of too high a nature to expose themselves too much to the public notice. I'm rather curious to find out more about them. I've tried to entice them beyond the veil of mystery that shrouds them, by cautiously testing the limits of their endurance. They have issued an edict that not more than four books are to be taken out at a time; I have already accumulated twelve. Perhaps when I have made a visible difference in the number of books they will send me a summons, and I shall have to return my books by relays of lower boys with wheelbarrows.

"Half a minute more. Besides books there is the nucleus of the Eton College Museum that is to be some day at the Library. It is at present rather limited, but it is to be very grand at some future period, they tell me. They are going to have several antediluvians and other rare things, and a real skeleton. All contributions thankfully received, Bunter. I've got three large double teeth that I intend presenting to the anatomical department. The curiosities are in a wire bookshelf near the fireplace. They consist of some

bits of South Sea islanders and things of that sort, a few rare and unreadable old MSS., and the face of an Egyptian mummy-case. Oakley sticks to it that it is the mummy itself, but don't believe him. Even Egyptian mummies had backs to their mouths. Upstairs is some more of the Museum, chiefly of the Ornithological class. I believe it is considered a very fine collection, but don't feel called upon to express an opinion. There are more undecipherable inscriptions up here, and one or two Hindoo objects of worship.

"There is a gallery runs round the Library about half-way up. This gallery commands the windows. Now you are out of reach of the Saps, it will be safe to rouse them if you desire to see them in motion, by opening a window. It will have the effect of making some of them get up and change their position, especially if the current of fresh air comes straight on their heads. Saps are not partial to these currents.

"At the end of the gallery is another room, with more of the Museum. There are some seals—not the Zoological sort, you know, Bunter, but the other. There are also some models of tombs with skeletons lying in them. I suppose they'll put them in the Sepulchral Department.

"Before you come away just look up, and you'll see some curious *fresco* things on the ceiling. They may represent anything you like. They weren't put there on purpose, Oakley says, but were made by the Collegers' ablutions up above.

"I think that's all, Bunter. But I really advise you to go and do the Library for yourself. What's that you say? Been there heaps of times? Why on earth didn't you tell me before? Wasting all my time here this way!"

And he went away quite indignant.

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL GOSSIP.

"DO you get much of that sort of thing?" I asked Meath, when he had gone. I thought that if such was the case I was very glad I didn't board at the same tutor's as Furneaux.

"Oh, yes," he answered, "fellows come in here a good deal. I suppose it's because my room is at the end of the passage, and they generally find me at home. Fellows object to loafing into a room and finding nobody there, even if no one is present to see their discomfiture when they open a door and the room is empty. Besides, it seems to afford them some gratification to come and pour out their sorrows into my chimney-ornaments, and I'm sure I don't mind, as long as they don't want me to say anything in return."

And so it is. A tremendous lot of time has to be sacrificed to sociability at Eton if one doesn't want to be looked upon as an absolute bear. Yet people say, "Oh, you have no difficulty about your work at Eton; you only have school for three hours at most," utterly forgetting that we have to prepare all our work out of school, and that it is subject to all manner of interruptions from fellows whom it requires very skilful manœuvring to get rid of.

For instance, there was a case occurred to myself just now. I was writing a letter, and the door opened, and a fellow called Fitton lounged in casually. He stood in the doorway a little while, then came right in, stood still again, and then remarked, "Hullo!" I replied, "Hullo! Well?" Then there was a pause, during which he moved to my arm-chair and sat down, while I went on writing. After a little he said, by way, I suppose, of accounting for his entrance, "Oh, I came in to talk." "All right," I said, "talk away; I'm agreeable." I didn't see that it was my duty to start the conversational game; I hadn't proposed it. Then he sat

for a little time longer in silence trying to think of something to say, and at last came out with, as an original remark, "Nice day, to-day." "Very," I said, and wrote on. I wanted my letter to catch the post. After a little interval, during which we had time to think, it seemed to strike him that it hadn't been such a very nice day after all, the same as it did to me on second thoughts, for it had been raining cats and dogs all day, so his next observation was, "Not such a nice day as yesterday, though." I was coming to the end of my letter, and so thought I would give him a little encouragement, so I said, in a tone as if it was a secret to be kept between him and me; "Ah, but we haven't ha such a jolly day as last Friday for a long time." He replied, "Ah!" and then the conversation flagged again, and after sitting for a little time longer screwing up his pocket handkerchief, and leaning forward to look at his feet while he tried to think of something to say, he at last gave it up as a bad job, and left me at peace.

I got rid of him pretty easily, simply because he hadn't got his subject ready beforehand. But some fellows are sharper, and have their conversation all ready before they plunge into one's room, and a long sentence at the same moment, which doesn't give the victim an opportunity of ridding himself of them by preserving a cold demeanour. He finds himself drawn irresistibly into conversation, especially if it is about a woe. There is a little chance of escape by showing a fellow one doesn't feel compelled to rejoice at his joys, but some crafty one will always begin with a woe, and then it does seem so brutal not to sympathize with their misfortunes, and so a woe is a safe thing to start a talk. Thus whole evenings are wasted where nobody has the slightest intention of their being so. A fellow comes into another's room to borrow a book or anything; he doesn't in the least mean to stay, but thinks he must make some excuse for his requirements; he lays it on the master's shoulders,

representing that if he hadn't had this or that work set him, there would have been no need for the loan; this is a woe; the lender sympathizes with him, and that leads on to a comparison between the various masters, then between the different merits of the divisions, for every one sticks up for his division, and so the gossip goes on from one subject to another till the whole evening is gone.

And so Meath, being of sedentary, or, as Pevensey expressed it, "sedimentary" habits, gets more of this than a good many fellows. From taking his observations *chez soi*, he was better able last half to watch the progress of the great reforms that were to take place at his tutor's, and he seemed to be rather under the impression that he was having a good deal to do with what was left of them. Only that didn't seem to be very much, as, after the first excitement had worn off, every one seemed to have come to the conclusion that they weren't so very bad after all, and, like St. Anthony's fishes, "each went his own way."

I went in to see Meath once after twelve, and found him puzzling over a knot he had tied in his pocket-handkerchief, which was connected in some way, he said, with some advice that he had promised to give somebody, but he couldn't, for the life of him, remember who, or what, or what it was about. Meath has always been given to these little superstitious tricks, such as not going under a ladder when he is out for a walk with you, as he maintains that it must inevitably bring ill-luck on one's head, even if only in the shape of half a brick, and many other customs of like sort.

He told me that the only fellows who ever dilated still on "the honour of the house" were Dawtrey and Clowborough, and their feeling even seemed to have degenerated a great deal more into "the honour of Dawtrey and Clowborough." They both had been in there that day, and there seemed to be a great rivalry between them. Dawtrey was a fellow who could never acknowledge himself outdone. If some one hap-

pened to remark casually that he had heard of a man walking a mile in eight minutes, Dawtrey would immediately declare that that was nothing; he had frequently walked it in seven minutes and a half; and if the next day the same fellow should announce that he had been wrong, and his man had done the distance in seven minutes, Dawtrey would be perfectly ready to acknowledge that he was wrong too, and that his mile was done in six and a half. Clowborough was nearly as bad, and was always going about inviting people to try the strength of his chest, puffing himself out very much in order to show it off; but after one day, when Pevensey represented to him that his chest did not lie, as he seemed to suppose, below the fourth button of his waistcoat, and practically demonstrated it by striking him there, he rather gave up that habit.

The result of all their talking was that neither wishing to allow the other to be better than himself, they challenged each other to enter for the walking race. The walking race never comes off much before the last fortnight of the half, but they had begun training at the time at which Meath told me about it. "And to see them train!" said he. Liebig's Extract when they got up, a chop or beefsteak at breakfast, three helps of beef at dinner, more chops at tea and more beef at supper, with cups of Liebig whenever they seemed to have nothing else to do, and with all this training, they used to come to expatiate to Meath on how brawny they were getting, although they seemed to think it a little odd that they didn't sometimes feel quite so well as they might have been. The best of it was that after a little time, they both began to get rather tired of it, and both seemed as if they would like to get out of it, but neither liked to be the first. Both used to come to Meath, and tell him in strict confidence that they each knew the other was never in earnest about that race affair, and wanted to shirk out of it, only didn't like to because he was afraid of the other laughing at him,

"because of course I haven't a thought of giving in." Meath had all the times in which each had done the distance, which were to be kept profound secrets, but as he found that the majority of the house was in the confidence of each of the two, he had no great compunctions in letting me have full particulars. Clowborough even went so far as to propose one day that the house ought to supply materials for training, as it was all being done in its honour.

As for Meath and his party's own little private bit of reform, it hadn't come to much either. They only had one more "convenient season" for a meeting of the Sap Club, and then it discussed a box of gingerbreads, did a good deal of gossip and no particular work. Pevensey couldn't be brought to see that the object of the club was not for everybody to do everybody else's work, and as long as that was the case much couldn't be expected to come out of it. The only part that remained to keep up the memory of its existence was the Science department, that had been originated to keep the members steady. Meath hadn't tried any particular science himself, because he said he found he had plenty to do if he really did his work properly, but the other fellows had gone in for it violently. Furneaux and Stortford had taken up chemistry; and used to go to the Laboratory three times a week with great regularity. At least Stortford did; Furneaux went about six times, and as he broke an experiment flask, or upset a bottle of some valuable smell or something of that sort every time, his zeal soon began rather to abate. But Stortford was tremendously strong on chemistry, and tried hard to persuade Meath to take extras in it too. He was always at the Laboratory in his right hours, and his wrong hours as well. He took Meath there one day and left him out in the umbrella stand while he went in, on pretence of getting a book he had left behind. Meath said he believed all he wanted really to do was to go in and gaze around in raptures as one does in a cathedral abroad.

He was sure Stortford looked upon the Laboratory in very much that light. After an ecstasy of half an hour's duration, he suddenly remembered Meath's existence, and then by way of compensation offered to initiate him into the mysteries of the sanctuary, as there was nobody else there and the coast was clear. Meath went cautiously in, as he was always rather chary about going amongst chemicals, and walked round, being very careful not to touch anything, whilst Stortford pointed out the chief beauties of the place. They would have finished their inspection without any accidents, but Meath beginning to feel more at home, unfortunately happened to lean against what appeared to be the only clear place in the whole wall, while Stortford showed him some dodge for ventilating the place. There was only one thing on this wall, a round bit of wood with an ivory button on it, something like a window curtain holder, he described it, and he leant on this, by doing which it seems that he affected some talisman or other, for an attendant spirit in the shape of a small and irate man appeared from somewhere. Meath fled and left Stortford to explain.

I was present once in Meath's room when Stortford came in to show him the last thing he had learnt in the Laboratory. It consisted of filling a bottle with water and then holding it downwards under some more water in a basin, while some one blew air into it through a tube and so gradually expelled the water, leaving air in its place. Stortford said that this air which he had blown in was nitrogen, and that flames wouldn't burn in it. He tried the experiment, and twice the match dropped to the bottom and went out. I said that I thought that the natural consequence of a flame dropping into a damp bottle was that it should go out, so Stortford, to convince me that it was the nitrogen, tried a third time and this time managed so that the match should touch no part of the bottle; then it burnt very well. So he said that he thought some other-gen must have got in by mistake, but he

assured us he had seen it done at the Laboratory. Chemistry appears to be good exercise at any rate; Stortford got as red in the face after puffing at his bottle as if he had been running a mile.

As for Pevensey, his system of scientific research seemed to be conducted on the principle of looking at all the -ies and -ologies he could think of in the dictionary and try them one after the other. He began with Anatomy, or the science of bones, as he preferred calling it, and tried to persuade Meath to let him make experiments on him with a large carving knife. But Meath didn't exactly see it, neither could Pevensey get any one else to sacrifice himself to the advancement of science, so he had to give Anatomy up for the want of a subject. Study of the human body naturally suggested study of the human head, so the next thing he tried was Phrenology. He bought a small plaster cast with all the organs of the human passions, &c., marked on it, and a book, and set to work hard for the next two days at the science of bumps, after which time he made an investigation of his fag's head, and the character he reported of him was something too awful for repetition.

However, he got tired of this science too, after a time, and took up Botany. He bought a lot of choice exotics and planted them in his garden-box; then the next day he pulled them up to study the way in which they struck root. After a week of this, he was surprised to find that they were not in quite so flourishing a state as they might be; so he said he thought he didn't care much for Botany, but should devote his garden-box to the cultivation of potatoes and other more domestic plants. The box for the time was converted into a field for geological researches, because he happened to find a bone amongst the earth while poking about in it, which he declared was a fossil, and after that he turned up an oyster-shell, which suggested Conchology. Not finding any more specimens, however, he gave up those sciences, and then

cast about in his mind what should be the next thing he should turn his hand to.

A brilliant idea suggested Harmony as a very nice pursuit. Bexley, at his tutor's, had a cornet, so he went down and, after a great deal of persuasion, got him to lend it him and to show him how to play it. Bexley sat down and flourished off a tune in a fine style; then he handed the instrument to Pevensey, who distended his cheeks and went through such awful contortions in his endeavours to elicit a sound, that Meath, who was there, began to be afraid he would do himself some internal injury; and at last he succeeded in producing a most horrible sound, something between a pig in convulsions and a squeaky slate pencil, enough to occasion a rapid decrease in the number of ancient horned cattle in the neighbourhood. He seemed to find cornet-playing too hard work for him for the time, but I understand that he has promised that some day we are to have the pleasure of hearing him perform on the trombone, or some other of those tremendous brass instruments that one has to get inside to play; that's more his style, he says.

When the Harmony lesson was over, he loitered about Bexley's room a little, and caught sight of his photographic apparatus, on which it occurred to him that Photography wouldn't be at all a bad thing. He asked Bexley if he wouldn't like an assistant, and Bexley, being in rather an agreeable mood at that moment, said that if Pevensey really meant it, he would be very glad of his help. Of course Pevensey had every intention of being serious, and the next day the apprenticeship began. For the following three days he talked of nothing but Photography; he spent all his time in Bexley's room, and made himself all black with nitrate of silver and other chemicals connected with the science. On the fourth day he felt himself so perfect in the art that he invited Meath to come into Bexley's room to be photographed, Bexley himself, as it happened, being out at the time. Meath

asked Pevensey first if he was sure Bexley wouldn't object to his using his apparatus, and he replied that Bexley had given him to understand that very morning that he could trust him with any of it. Meath accordingly went to the studio, and Pevensey put him into a very uncomfortable but exceedingly artistic attitude, and then proceeded to take his portrait. Meath had to sit for about a quarter of an hour after the cap was removed before the picture would "fix," or whatever it was Pevensey called it, and then the picture was carried away into a dark corner of the room, where Pevensey did something, dabbling about in a basin and knocking over a lot of bottles during the transaction. At last he produced with great triumph a little square bit of glass, with what looked like a lot of ink smudges on it, and asked Meath if he didn't think it was very like. Meath said he couldn't see anything at all, and was told that he must wait till it developed itself. Just then Bexley came in, and didn't at all seem to approve of Pevensey's touching his things. In fact, he informed him then and there that his services as apprentice would not be required any longer.

Pevensey now found himself thrown on his own resources again, and while cogitating what science he could best take up next, he came upon an old telescope under his bureau, and this suggested the idea that he should study Astrology, as he called it. He began at once by looking at the sun, which he informed Meath was then "at the full," evidently being a trifle confused in his ideas between the sun and moon. However, that didn't last long; but a telescope to him was much the same as a microscope, and so he said the next thing he was going in for was "Etymology, or the science of bluebottles," which he intended studying with the aid of the small end of his newly found telescope.

Somehow or other this didn't get on either, and as he had nearly run through all his stock of sciences, he was reduced to more out-of-the-way ones: he tried Anthropology. He

called it Anthropophagy at first, but that was more than Meath could stand; Anthropology even wasn't the right word, but Anthropophagy was too much. He meant by it the study of human character. The way in which he went to work about this was worthy of him; it consisted in dropping jam-pots and other light articles of that sort casually out of the window on to the pavement below and seeing how the passers-by took it. The opinion he formed of the majority of his fellow-creatures was that they are a slow lot, they can't appreciate a joke. If Pevensey's idea of a joke is a jam-pot on the top of one's best Sunday hat, I'm afraid I must include myself in his category.

He must have been at his very last resources for an -ology on the day of which I am speaking, for Meath suddenly remembered that the knot tied in his pocket-handkerchief was to remind him to think of one for him—he had been in that morning to know what Meath thought of his taking up Doxology.

CHAPTER XII.

CLASSICAL PROGRESS.

As Meath had arranged it with himself that he was to give up all hope of honour from an athletic point of view, and to depend for it on what he did in the study line, to ask him about his work was one of the few sure ways to set his tongue going, as it was a subject he was fond of.

He was under the impression that the authorities had got a special eye on him, and that they had marked him as destined for great things. This impression was caused entirely by the fact that towards the middle of the half, for some reason or other, probably to keep the divisions more in proportion, he was shifted up from being captain of one division to being lag of the one above. He said he thought it must

be because the authorities thought that if he was separated from Stortford he might get on better, and that it was a special dispensation of providence and all that sort of thing.

However it was, though, he got an extremely nice place in school as being moved up latish in the half, he had to have a special desk and form provided for him in the corner, where he could, if so disposed, lean back against the wall and shut his eyes and meditate. He did a good deal of meditation in the half, I believe, as whenever by chance I had to take a message into that division, I usually observed him in a meditating position.

And then he liked his master and he thought his master liked him, which was another great thing in his favour. He was always of opinion, though, that a master ought to be made to understand the difference between them and not to be allowed to become too familiar. Thus he used to stop behind after school occasionally to talk in a friendly way if he could spare the time, just to show that there was no enmity between them. And sometimes he would laugh at the master's jokes, to encourage him. But if they became too facetious then he felt it his duty to treat them with coldness. As, for instance, when the master tried to console him for his trouble with the præpostor-book by trying to prove that præpostor is etymologically connected with provost, he had to point out the absurdity of the argument; as if the provost had to waste all his time wandering about into attics and coal-cellars and other out-of-the-way places in search of invisible boy's-maids.

I was present at a discussion in Meath's room one day on the subject of treating masters, and those were the views that he propounded. Others were Furneaux', who thought that masters were to be treated quite as inferiors. Stortford had no particular opinions; while Pevensey stood up for the system of there being a natural enmity between masters and

us, and that if a master said that a thing was to be done, that was quite enough reason for not doing it.

Meath always now made a point of learning his lessons very carefully, so that when he went into school he could open his book and sit calm and secure as to whether he was put on or not, and not in the terrible state of tremor and nervousness that he had been used to be in formerly. He always settled himself on "system" as he called it. When he had sat down he put his hat in front of him on the desk, and took out his pencil and knife and proceeded to sharpen the former. This was to excite a due proportion of interest as to his movements on the part of the master; Meath was sure he was dying to know what he was doing behind his hat; that he rather suspected him of cutting his name, but daren't ask for fear of exposing himself to derision on his suspicions proving unfounded.

Occasionally he used to take notes, but this was rather difficult, he said, as there was a fellow who sat opposite him with a cough, and whenever the master made any particularly important remark, whether it was that the idea tickled this fellow or what, Meath didn't know, but he always made a point of bursting out with a series of barks that occasioned the loss of that remark to posterity.

When he thought the master was getting a little too forward and wanted suppressing, he used to take in some of his classical library that he had brought from home. This consisted of a collection of fine old massy volumes that apparently hadn't been opened for years, and had accumulated a large variety of entomological curiosities in the meanwhile. He used to open these with a bang calculated to impress the master very much, and when the dust had somewhat subsided and he and all his immediate neighbours had done sneezing, first he used to expel all the strange creatures that might have been lurking between the pages, and then sit down to peruse his notes. His books consisted

three parts of Latin notes, and he showed them to me with great pride as very valuable. I daresay they may be; I looked upon them as interesting as affording a striking example of how difficult it is for people to agree in this world. The annotators are frightful ones to squabble, and they record their squabbles in bad Latin in their notes for the benefit of seekers after knowledge. For instance, Meath finds a difficult passage in his Horace; he consults his notes and finds one to say that a party of the name of Ionisius, which is not altogether unlike the modern one of Joncs, is of opinion that the passage should be rendered thus and thus; Meath is satisfied and is about to take the learned Ionisius's opinion as conclusive, when perhaps he turns over the page and there he finds that another commentator, less bold than Ionisius, and only known to the public as V., has, under cover of this anonymosity, quashed poor Ionisius's opinion by the single expression "Absurd!!!" or "How can this be?" and then proceeds to give his views on the subject, cutting up the unfortunate I. as if he were his deadliest enemy. Occasionally, however, retribution comes on V. from the hand of a person called Men. Pop., who in his turn catches it from Dicab. Ant., and so on. I should like to catch some of these learned gentlemen and shut them up in a room together, just to see how much of them would be left after the first half-hour or so.

Sometimes when the contest waxes too furious, the commentators seemed to have agreed to settle the dispute by referring the matter to the arbitration of the Scholiast. The Scholiast appears to have been a party who got hold of all the classics before any one else, and so having the advantage of seniority his opinion is to be conclusive. I don't wish to say a word against his character—far from it, for Meath tells me that it is the duty of one who desires a thorough acquaintance with classical lore, to look upon him with

reverence as something above the common herd; but still I can't help thinking that he hasn't that strict regard for veracity that I should like to see in one of so exalted a nature. *Par exemple*, I once remember at private we came to the name of a bird that wasn't to be found in the Lexicon. The Scholiast, however, had been exerting himself in the cause of posterity, and had found out that the name of the unknown biped was a fox-goose. I'm sure we're all deeply indebted to the Scholiast for his trouble, but he is not contented with what he has done, and feeling it his duty to let us have full particulars of the natural history of the creature, he informs us that it may be distinguished from other birds by having a white spot under its chin; that it exists chiefly upon pea-soup, and that it is a more manly bird than the goose, and attacks eagles and cats and things of that sort. I can't help thinking that if he had seen one so close as to be able to study its habits so nicely, that it is a pity he had not a salt-cellar at hand in order to catch it and have it stuffed for the benefit of posterity. Still Meath says it is the right thing to reverence the Scholiast, and so I do. When I have discovered where his grave is I shall go and drop a tear there, or if there is more than one Scholiast with a grave, I shall go round and drop a tear on each, and resolve to follow in his or their—as the case may be—footsteps.

But to return to Meath and his work. He began to make his work less of a task now and to appreciate it more for its own sake. He entered more fully into the spirit of the Greek choruses, for one thing, and used to descant to me on their poetic beauties for half-hours together. A Greek chorus is certainly a very beautiful thing, especially when rendered into English with the Lexicon: "Chorus of Athenian elderly females (who ought to be at home minding their household business). Oh my! alas me! wretched am I! you have come oh, well-supported-by-a-staff head of a stranger, you have

come on your feet (this is to obviate all possibility of his having come on his hands) to this place, to this most excellent habitation of the well-horsed country, to the abounding-in-fleeces plain of Athens, where the shrill-voiced nightingale perching most of all whines among the greenish-yellow mountain glades, inhabiting the ruddy bush of the ivy, and the unapproachable, sunless, thousand fruited, unblown-about-by-all-the-storms foliage of the maddening god. I am exceedingly desirous that Venus should be worshipped, the love-compelling one. Oh! spare me, Venus, thou beloved of goddesses, and thou, oh Bacchus!" By this time the chorus may be supposed to have arrived at a state of poetic frenzy, under the influence of which they have forgotten any point that they ever had, and so they break into wild strains about the weather, or the crops, or anything, it doesn't particularly matter what, and one feels carried away one does not know where.

Meath's verses were also done on system. He always managed to make his master think there was a great deal more in his verses than he could make out. "It isn't surprising," said he, "as very often I can't make them out myself." He confessed to me that if he dashed off a copy of verses express style, at an average of thirty or so an hour, they generally turned out well, while, if he tried to polish them, doubts used to begin to rise in his mind that there might be a grammatical error here, where there very often wasn't, or something else wrong there; and then he used to begin scratching out here, and putting in somewhere else, and the result always seemed to be that the composition didn't turn out half so well as if he had left them alone. He believed that the reason was that the masters didn't dare follow him in his flights of poetic fancy, independent of dictionary and Gradus; but that when he reduced his verses to the level of their intellect, they weren't afraid of them, and so went in for a good maul at them. "Effect is everything," he said, as he came in one

day, and found his copy of verses on the "Death of Lesbia" had been blown into his bath.

He didn't manage quite so well with his prose composition, he said. There wasn't the scope for originality in that that there was in poetry. One could ramble as much as one liked in verse, and people only admired it the more; but in prose one had to keep to particular rules, and not leave the things that were too difficult to express to the imagination. Again, if one kept too closely to the English, there was always the danger of falling into the canine style. Meath tried every sort of style—the Ciceronian, where the beauty consists in long, connected sentences. Meath wrote connected sentences that extended over a page and a half, and made one quite out of breath with reading them. Again, he tried the Tacitean style, that consists of leaving out all the most important words; and he tried a style of his own—a sort of cross between the two—but he found he couldn't awe the masters as he could with his verses. The fact was, he said, that he thought he must have a soul above imitations, and Latin prose was nothing but a system of grovelling imitation that he could not bring himself down to act upon.

Then there was his Greek composition. Barring the accents he managed that pretty well. The laws of Greek accents he found to be extremely arbitrary. He complained that if he put an accent on a word one way it was wrong; then another week he would try putting it on another way, and that was wrong too; then, in despair, he would put it in the only available place remaining, and immediately it would jump back to one of the former places. He invested in a small pamphlet on Greek accentuation, and the first thing in it was a list of exceptions that it would take two men and a boy the whole of their natural lifetime to learn. When he has a little time to spare he says he is going to learn six columns of Greek Lexicon every day to get used to the accents. Otherwise he sees no other way to do it. He told

me confidentially that he didn't believe even the masters knew all they pretended about accents, and that they were only guided by caprice. He had intimated as much to his master one day, and he hadn't contradicted him.

CHAPTER XIII.

MATHEMATICAL DIFFICULTIES.

No one likes to acknowledge himself beaten, and so Meath tried to persuade himself to stick to it and not give in, but his efforts went on so long without meeting the reward of success that he at last felt himself obliged to confess to himself, however unwilling he might be to hear it, that he could not get on with Mathematics. Some people have no turn for Mathematics, and he was afraid he must be one of those some, for, try however hard he could, he could not overcome the difficulties of that branch of learning. I think personally that it must have been because he had no faith in them, and couldn't persuade himself that they were any good to any one, because he was always arguing about its being a great deal of trouble about things that could easily be settled by a little common sense.

Besides, he said, fate always seemed to ordain that he should meet with difficulties on every side in his Mathematics. Whenever he entered school he invariably used to begin by finding that he had brought in the wrong book. If he brought in an algebra he used to find that the division was going to do trigonometry, and if he brought in a trigonometry he would be as certain to find that the master proposed to run through the algebra. This naturally was a drawback to his progress.

First, then, there was trigonometry. When he had been out of school, and had got the right book, and had settled at last, he had to set down and carry on a sort of warfare in-

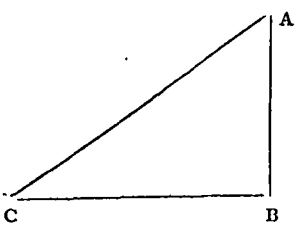
side him to get himself to believe that there might be some good in trigonometry, which he used to find a most difficult matter. Now, if enthusiasm was catching, Meath says he certainly ought to have caught it, for the master he was up to, was most fearfully enthusiastic about trigonometry, and used to go into ecstasies about sines and cosmes, and a's and b's, which he used to call "*bee-youtiful* little formulæ," the sort of things that would reach from Eton to Slough. Meath said he really used to get so excited sometimes, and to climb about on tables and chairs to get at the otherwise unattainable corners of the black-board, in order to show some of his "beautiful little formulæ," that he (Meath) used sometimes to get rather alarmed, and to think whether it wouldn't be better to take measures to calm him. Meath used to try to force himself into ecstasies, too; but he didn't seem to succeed.

The next thing he usually did was to go up with his book and try to show the master how anxious he was to learn. But this generally would end in a failure, as the master often would put some such question to him as to what he would do if he had to measure the height of a certain window inaccessible from the inside, and if Meath suggested putting up a ladder, and so getting at it from the outside, the master would get angry, and give him to understand he was a fool, as it ought to be done by angles and all those sort of dodges.

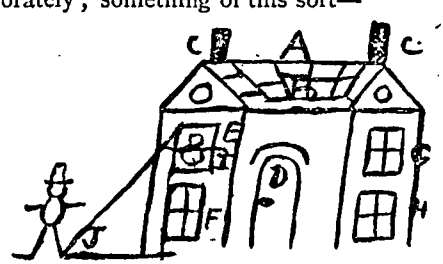
Meath said he couldn't help it if he did lower himself in the master's estimation; he did his best, and he could do no more. One day the master put on rather a milder mood, and advised him to do a little private practice. So he returned to his tutor, got out his books, and proceeded to take the altitude of a chimney-pot opposite. He was sure he did exactly as the book told him, but when he went into school next and showed the master the result, three miles, five furlongs, thirty-seven poles, four yards, two feet, and six

inches and a quarter, he described the master's face as a sight to be seen.

When he had finished his usual preliminary argument, he usually went back to his seat and set to work. He always did everything very conscientiously, and so he took a great deal of pains in setting down his sums. The master told him there was a great deal in that. Now trigonometry consists in measuring imaginary houses or wells, or ships, or things of that sort, and most fellows would be contented with drawing figures to illustrate their sums like this—



A is the window, of which the height is to be measured; B, the ground; C, the man measuring it. But Meath was not contented with that. He wanted to show the master that he was trying to take an interest in his work, and wanted to look upon it not only as work, as other fellows did, so he didn't just scratch off a few trumpery lines like that, just to get it over as soon as possible, but he did his figures much more elaborately; something of this sort—



A is the house of which the window is to be measured; B, the roof of the house of which the window is to be measured; CC, the chimneys on the roof of the house of which the window is to be measured; D, the door of the house; E, the window of which the height is to be measured; F G H, more windows of which the height isn't to be measured; I, a man standing at the window of which the height is to be measured; J, a man who is measuring the height of the window of which, &c. But Meath never could get any further than that. And the master didn't seem somehow to appreciate his talents as he ought.

Then he never could be induced to see Meath's arguments that the whole system of the problems was absurd and useless for common life; in trigonometry, where a plumb-line and a foot-rule would solve most of the questions in half the time that trigonometry would; and in algebra and arithmetic, where it was absurd to suppose that any man in his right senses would spend all his time in turning taps on and off into a cistern, or rowing from Cambridge to Ely, and stopping there twenty minutes for dinner, and then coming back to calculate the rate of the stream. And who could put out his capital at thirty per cent. without being locked up as incompetent to manage his own affairs?

As for Euclid, Meath had no scruples in saying that he hated it. Why on earth the old gentleman couldn't have found something better to occupy himself with than to sit down and set himself abstruse problems to work out that could not do him the slightest possible good when he had done them, didn't matter so much to Meath;—he was all for letting people amuse themselves as they pleased, however strange their ways of doing so might appear to others;—but why he could not have kept them to himself, instead of transmitting them to the use of posterity, Meath couldn't conceive; unless he was of an intensely misanthropic disposition, and not content with doing harm in his own gene-

ration, was ambitious of doing something towards the torture of future ones, and then he (Meath) considered that posterity had a right to cry out. All he could say was that he would just like to meet — Euclid, Esq. with a good stout umbrella in his hand for a few minutes' private conversation.

The worst of it all was that Pevensey, whom Meath looked upon as a duffer at all work, had a turn for mathematics, and especially trigonometry. He had advanced beyond books, and got to instruments long before this,—diabolical instruments with sharp points that he would leave about in the chairs. Meath is afraid he would never get as far as instruments.

They say they want higher mathematics up at the Universities. Higher mathematics includes trigonometry, I believe. In that case Meath says they'll have to want.

CHAPTER XIV.

ZOOLOGY.

MEATH's ward, Pevensey, was suddenly struck with the idea, towards the middle of the half, that if he could only keep a few pets, and so become more domesticated—which suggests ideas of a cat and a parrot—he might find it more easy to be good. Only he didn't talk about it as keeping pets—he called it the science of zoology.

I was also consulted on the subject when I was in there one day, and we held a committee meeting on the subject of pets, and the general opinion of the company seemed to be that pets, as a rule, were not advantageous at Eton. Pets at home are all very well, where there is sure to be some one to look after them; but at Eton, where there is only one person interested in each pet, or if there are more than one, they each wish to treat them in a different manner; pets do not usually prosper.

Pets at Eton may be divided into the common and the uncommon classes. The common class includes birds, squirrels,

and dormice. Birds are usually the best off; as if they manage to survive a half, and then the owner doesn't forget to take them away with him in the holidays, they generally get made a present of to some of the people at home, and do not return to the vicissitudes of an Eton life.

The next in order to be considered are squirrels. The squirrel is a very perverse beast. As soon as it is purchased it begins to make it its object to leave the world as soon as possible; or at any rate to spite its owner by rendering itself comparatively valueless. It is the weaker-minded sort of squirrel that does this latter, and he effects it thus: when the owner lets him out for a run, as is the custom with the inexperienced lower boy—for, as a rule, it is only lower boys who keep pets—he will run under the bureau, or up the side of the window, where he will lie, just allowing his pursuer to catch hold of the tip of his tail. He does so, and pulls, thinking thereby to secure his squirrel and restore him to his cage, preparatory to going into eleven o'clock school, or some other place at which he is already overdue. But not so. This is what the wily squirrel has been aiming at. The owner pulls at one end of the tail, the squirrel at the other, and the result is that the said caudal appendage slips off like a glove. The squirrel is useless, and he is happy, for though, of course, abandoned as worthless—for what is a squirrel without a tail?—your squirrel is a thorough fatalist, and cares not what may become of him as long as he is revenged on his purchaser.

But there are still stronger-minded squirrels than this, squirrels who, like the fathers of Jerusalem, sooner than bear the yoke of slavery, will kill their families and finally commit suicide. I knew a squirrel myself once, who effected this in a most ingenious manner. It was evident that his wife was of a less heroic turn of mind, and unwilling to leave the pleasures of this world, although accompanied with servitude. So this squirrel, finding persuasion useless,

had to resort to a device worthy of the great mind in which it was originated. First he entered into the tread-mill cage himself, and got the entrance hole to correspond with that in the sleeping-box; then he called to his spouse, under pretence of giving her some directions about tea, and while she had her head through the two holes he suddenly began to rotate. A squeak, a guggle, and all was over! and it only remained for the patriarch to get rid of himself. He pretended to be sorry for his wife's death, and to be pining away in solitary captivity, so his unsuspecting master allowed him more liberty, letting him run about the room at certain hours of the day. About three days after the death of Mrs. Squirrel the afflicted relic was discovered to have committed suicide in the water-jug, and was dragged thence a lifeless corpse. I admire that squirrel. He ought to have a memorial to his magnanimity erected in his master's garden-box. It may perhaps, though, have been the lady who was the heroine, but at any rate it was a touching piece of animal romance.

Dormice, too, as a rule, come to a bad end. There seems to be a popular delusion amongst owners of dormice that they can exist on nothing at all, or at any rate, on very little, and that they can certainly do without water; indeed, I have heard it upheld that water is bad for them. The result need hardly be mentioned. The dormouse's death is not an active one like the squirrel's, who prefers it to slavery, but a passive one, pining away through sheer obstinate despondency. I once knew a dormouse who died in spite of the best of treatment. He showed symptoms of a cold and his master put his feet into a salt-cellar of hot water, yet in spite of all this care he drooped into an early grave. Meath also knew some dormice (and didn't he know them still, he said) who had escaped and were still running about the houses, having propagated their species to any extent, and were the constant disturbers of his slumbers.

Minnows come midway between common and uncommon pets. They are only kept in the summer half. If the owner doesn't forget to change the water at least once a fortnight, and doesn't make use of the aquarium as a slop basin, or provided that the boys' maid does not knock it over, and constant relays of minnows are kept up, as a rule they scrape through to the end of the half, allowing for unforeseen accidents. I don't know what becomes of them in the holidays, unless the servants eat them as a relish when on board wages.

As to uncommon pets, I have known a snake. This belonged to a fellow who sat next to me when I first came and was in fourth form. He used to produce it out of his pocket while we were up in Upper School. One day it escaped and glided in among the hot-water pipes, and for all I know it may be wandering about there still, having developed to the size of a boa-constrictor and feeding on torn-up fourth-form exercises.

I also know of a chameleon that was kept in a bird-cage, and once got out between the bars and has been never heard of since. I often wake suddenly, expecting to find it sitting on my pillow and putting out its tongue at me while engaged in transforming itself into lithe shapes of all colours. Ugh! I shudder to think of it.

There was a vivarium upset at my tutor's a little time ago, and one is even now constantly meeting tree-frogs and salamanders and other strange beasts coming up and down stairs. I believe the whole staff of boys' maids is at present under a month's notice to quit.

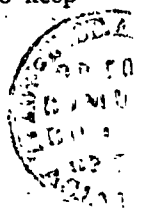
Stortford had a tortoise once, through whose shell he bored a hole, and tied it to a piece of string; then he let it run loose in his garden-box. But the tortoise was of an adventurous disposition, and was not content with taking mild constitutionals in the garden-box, and used to be found, on his master's return from school, suspended head downwards

by the string, having toppled over the edge in his search after larger fields for discovery. Stortford always used to say that this was a peculiarity of this kind, which was a superior sort of tortoise. He never exactly explained if the peculiarity consisted in hanging downwards by strings; because, if so, I should think that sort of tortoise was rather a rarity. He may, however, have only been referring to the gymnastic propensities of his tortoise. But the poor animal eventually went the way of all pets; for whether through mischief, or only from a plausible desire of putting himself beyond the reach of emulation of all other gymnastic tortoises, we shall never know, but one day he bit through his string, ran to the side of the box, and dived over, narrowly missing the captain's head as he was standing at the door, and dashing himself into a thousand fragments—maybe more, but I don't think anybody took the trouble to count.

Meath said, in the course of the deliberation, that he never had had any regular pets himself, common or uncommon, but he had had one or two irregular ones. One was a dog—a sort of cross between a bull-dog and a skye-terrier—a playful sort of brute that Pevensey found in the street, and beguiled up into Meath's room to please him, he said, because one day he had been inveighing against pets, and saying the only sort he cared for were dogs. Pevensey invited this animal into tea just before lock-up, and they had the greatest difficulty getting it out again. It was fed copiously on bread and strawberry jam, and it had some tea to drink, with plenty of sugar, and then Pevensey undertook, by way of making amends for having inconvenienced Meath, to see it safe out when he went to extras. However, while Pevensey went to get his ticket from his dame the dog wandered into his tutor's part of the premises, and what became of him after that Meath never dared inquire. He had another odd sort of pet once; it was a stag-beetle. He found it in the playing-fields in a semi-dying state, and being

always inclined to be tender-hearted towards the unfortunate, he took it home, called it Bob, and fed it. He trained it so well that it would come when he held out his finger to it, and lay hold of it. He began to get quite fond of it, but when it got well it flew away; an instance, he said, of the basest ingratitude.

And so, after all these experiences had been recounted, it was decided that it would be best for Pevensey not to keep pets—I mean, study Zoology.



CHAPTER XV.

RHETORIC.

"How does your Debating Society get on?" I happened to ask Meath one Sunday, when we were out for our walk.

"Oh, don't talk about it," he said impatiently; "the sooner the confounded thing shuts up the better, I say; that is, if it's always to be conducted in the way it is now—all by routine."

I subsequently learnt that I had touched on a sore subject with Meath at that time, for the night before had been his night for opening the debate, and he had expected to carry his point; but his tutor had attended and brought in a friend, who, just as everybody was going to vote on Meath's side, had got up and brought three entirely new arguments into light, which Meath had carefully suppressed, and so convinced everybody the other way. Then, when the proceedings were over, he had gone upstairs and found the boys' maid had taken his candle and left the room in darkness, so that he nearly broke his shins on his bath, which his fag had carefully left so that he should just fall into it on his way into his room. Altogether, he was just at that moment very touchy about it; but, though he professed to wish to avoid

the subject, I managed to gather a good deal of information regarding it in the course of the growl in which he indulged in order to relieve his feelings.

The proceedings of the Society always began by voting for the next week's debate. Every one who voted for the one that was chosen was bound to speak by the rules. Not that that mattered much, because every one felt it their duty to speak, whether they had any particular arguments to bring forward or not; at least, if they didn't, every one else scowled at them in a manner calculated to awe them into speaking, if they showed any signs of using the privilege that they gained by being lucky enough to vote for the wrong debate.

It was Mr. Vernant who gave out what the debates were to be, and he felt himself a great personage while doing so, smiling and hopping about from one leg to the other in tune to the dulcet accents that fell from his lips. (This was all Meath's bitter irony.) When the voting was over, he announced the one that had the majority of votes, said who would have to speak, and then, after giving out that "Mr. So-and-so would now open the debate on such-and-such a subject," flopped into his chair and remained there till he might be wanted again. They were all Mr., for the time being, while the meeting lasted; five minutes before they were Dickey and Bunter, and all sorts of familiar names.

The object of the debates was always to desire something, or to admire something. All that had been as yet had either turned on "whether itwould be desirable that something should happen," or "whether somebody's conduct was admirable." It was a sort of conventionality that ought to be broken through. Meath had tried to do so by putting up his debate as, "Ought Free Trade to be encouraged?" but Vernant had seemed so hurt about it that, out of regard to his feelings, he had changed it to "Whether it was desirable to encourage Free Trade?" But it was absurd. Even the lower boys had got hold of it, and he had heard them at

dinner asking each other whether it would be desirable to pass the potatoes, or whether the butler was to be admired for the way in which he poured out the beer?

When Vernant had sat down the Opener got up, unfolded his documents and began. The Opener was allowed by a sort of tacit understanding in the Society to read his speech, but nobody else might. The result of this had been that for the first two debates all had learnt up speeches beforehand and came in and said them off like a saying lesson, so that the debate was nothing but a series of unconnected speeches; but after they became less enthusiastic they had given that up, and now they trusted a good deal to luck and what they could gather from former speakers and bring out as original ideas. Of course, this being the case, those that spoke last came off the best, while Meath, for one coming early in the order, had to exercise some sort of originality.

The Opener's speech generally gave all the statistics. It always began in the same way, by an apology for his not having had time to go very deeply into the subject, which of course it was his business to do, and it always ended by his saying, "I have not been able to bring forward any more arguments, but I hope you will agree with me in thinking"—whatever might be the subject of debate,—and then sitting down abruptly with a sigh of relief amid the cheers of the house. The Society was certainly very lenient.

Then the Seconder got up. Now Meath always had an idea that a Seconder meant somebody who upheld some one else, but in this Society it seemed to have a different meaning, that of Opposer. At least that was a moot point. Some said that the leader of the Opposition ought to be called the Opposer, while others, including the President and Secretary, stuck up for it that he was the Seconder. The Opposerites though, Meath thought, would gain their point in the end, for at the last meeting there had been a motion put on the table by the President, and Vernant had got up and said, "I beg to

second this motion," on which Furneaux very pertinently asked, "Do you mean oppose it?" Vernant had got wroth, and told him of course not. But Meath said he would like to know what "Second" really meant, and if it had two meanings, how they were to know which to take, without the use of asterisks.

It had been the custom as yet in all the debates that they had had, to forget that a Seconder was required until about an hour before the meeting, and then the Opener had to go round trying to persuade every one to oppose him. Of course no one liked to do it if they knew nothing about it, as they couldn't get up the subject at a minute's notice, and so at last it generally ended in a compromise by getting some more good-natured fellow than the rest to undertake the job on condition that the Opener should tell him what he was going to say. Meath had had the greatest difficulty in finding a Seconder, and as he was particularly ambitious of having a good debate, he had written out a speech for Stortford and made him learn it by heart at tea.

The Seconder had to bring forward all the *Cons*; the Opener confined himself to the *Pros*, and tried to keep the *Cons* as much as possible out of the question; or *vice versâ*, if the Opener brought forward all the *Cons*, the Seconder produced all the *Pros*, and then sat down after saying that he hoped *he* had convinced his hearers into *his* way of thinking, "though he had not been able to bring forward, &c."

When the ice was thus broken the debate proper began, at least what ought to have been the debate proper, only in this Society it was only an exhibition of a large assortment of styles of rhetoric all on one theme.

When the Seconder ended, there was a little pause, and everybody looked at Sortell, who was expected to begin as the senior member. Sortell's plan was first to compliment the Opener and Seconder on their "able" speeches, whether he meant it sarcastically or not is uncertain, and

then he took one of the *Pros.*, and cut that about till he had led his hearers to suppose that he was on the *Cons.* side, and after he had exhausted that subject, he changed his tactics and proceeded to argue with equal vehemence against one of the *Cons.*; then when he had given every one to suppose that he was divided in his opinion and was going behind the chair, he suddenly ended up with, "Therefore, gentlemen, I agree with," whichever side he had settled on in his mind before, leaving them entirely in the dark as to why.

Then it was Meath's turn, and he always jumped up and started off immediately so as to get it over like a blue pill. He fixed his eyes on the gas and began. Now it was very odd, he said, that while he was waiting for his turn he could compose splendid speeches in his head, with points, and *tournures*, and perorations, quite equal to anything of Cicero's or Demosthenes', he was sure; he was always ready to electrify the house, but somehow or other, when he got up, every word of his speech, except the beginning, always went out of his head. He got as far as the first five lines or so, and then his ideas failed him. He generally started with a quotation; "Mr. President and Gentleman"—everybody always began with, "Mr. President and Gentlemen"—"some one has said," and then he went on with his quotation, generally rather a deficient one, but with what might be wanting supplied out of his own head. "Some one" was a great authority of his. Very often the quotation hadn't anything particular to do with the subject, in which case he would go on to say, "But that does not so much concern us to-day;" and then the speech proper ought to have begun, but, as a rule, it didn't. If the quotation was an apt one, he added after it, "and rightly too," and tried to work into the speech that way, but he didn't generally succeed any better than in the other. When he had done all he could with his quotation, he generally found his ideas reduced to his joke. He always contrived to bring in a joke because he enjoyed

seeing the other fellows pounce upon it, and worry it, and pull it about in their speeches, and turn it and twist it till it was hardly to be recognized, and then serve it up as their own joke in all its different forms. Meath's jokes went a long way towards helping the other fellows on. But nevertheless his speeches were usually failures; at least they weren't half what he intended them to be. He only intended the quotation as an opening and the joke as a little diversion from the grandeur of his speeches, but the usual result was that the whole speech was limited to the quotation and the joke. Then he hesitated for a few moments, trying to collect his ideas, but when he perceived that he was only keeping the others waiting, he concluded with, "Therefore, gentlemen"—like Sortell, without having given any more reason for his opinion than the latter.

Then he had to wake up Stortford, who started up, and began slap off, "Mr. President and Gentlemen, I don't agree," or sometimes "I do agree," by way of variation, "with" something that had already been said, whatever he could first recall to his mind. By this time he had recovered himself more, and on taking it into consideration he evidently discovered that he was wrong in his statement, so he had to set to work his way round to prove that he did agree with a thing because he didn't, or *vice versâ*, requoting Meath's joke to support himself. Then he ended up with the universal "Therefore, gentlemen," and sat down to return to his slumbers.

After that Linwood got up. Linwood certainly had the best idea of speaking of any of them. He had great power over his words, and he could keep his ideas well arranged in his head, so that his speeches really did some good. He went in rather too much for the high-flown style, but there was no great harm in that as long as he could keep it up throughout.

It was the fashion to sneer at Linwood, but Meath

thought if they all spoke more as he did, the Society would be better.

Dawtrey was the next in order. Dawtrey thought himself a very fine speaker—he gave Meath to understand so—but his speeches were all too much alike. They were all very well for the first two or three lines, but when one began to know what was coming next they rather lost their freshness. Meath thinks that he must have found his first speech, which, like all the rest of the society, he had written out and learnt up, take so well, that he kept it, and used it with a few suitable blanks that he could fill up to suit the occasion. The chief points in his speech were first to take Meath's joke, and try to make it into a new one; then he took a big sounding word that he had previously looked out hap-hazard in the dictionary, and introduced among a lot of little words to produce an effect; and lastly, he finished up with a sort of lecture on the depravity of human nature, which might be introduced into any speech, because it had no reference to any subject in particular.

Clowborough usually rose next. First he got behind his chair, as if afraid some one was going to hit him, then he took hold of the back, looked at the ceiling, cleared his throat, and began. Clearing his throat was a great point in Clowborough's speeches. Pevensey counted how many times he did it once in a speech of three minutes' duration, and it came to thirty-seven. Clowborough always announced by way of preface that he would divide his argument into three heads, which heads appeared to be—first, if the thing ought to be; secondly, if it oughtn't to be; thirdly, if it wouldn't be best to leave it alone altogether. Then he proceeded to argue on these heads, and after having let it be understood that in his opinion the third course would be the best to adopt, he suddenly left off by informing the society that he was inclined to favour one side more than the other after all, without giving any definite reason for his decision.

Then there was generally an interval, as it wasn't quite an understood thing who was the next to go on. Pevensey sometimes got to here. He never said much; he only began, "Mr. President and Gentlemen, I think that—" used one of the ideas that had been started before, and reseated himself.

It was at about this period of the proceedings that it was supposed to be etiquette to give the President and Secretary time to speak. The President usually did, and he generally did more to enlighten the house than any one else who had spoken before. Vernant, who was a great one at statistics, came after him to sweep up any fragments in the shape of errors in anybody's statements, and then it was Furneaux's turn to speak.

Furneaux always spoke last. His form of speech was only suited to be last. It always opened by his saying that he looked upon all the arguments that had been brought forward as "exceedingly absurd." But he didn't say why; he went on with a few irrelevant matters, and when he had done, if neither their tutor nor any visitor were present to tell them all that they had left out that should have been brought forward, the President asked if any gentleman had any more to say. Nobody ever seemed to care to, and so the house divided and they went to bed.

When the real debate went on was next day at dinner, when it furnished a topic of discourse. One would say to the other, "But I think that argument of yours doesn't hold good because so-and-so is the case;" on which the other would reply, "Oh, but it isn't so." And then they would go at it hammer and tongs, the result generally being that the vanquished one finished up with, "Well, why didn't you say that last night?" thereby getting the best of his victor.

The lower part of the house had started an Opposition Society. They didn't debate on such lofty subjects as their superiors—Meath believed they made inquiries into the

system of the curling of pig's tails, or the character of their fag-masters—but he imagined their meetings were much more animated than those of the real Society. Runnet, his fag, was a great light at these meetings.

Amongst other monstrosities of the Debating Society was the Book. This book was kept for the speeches to be recorded in, and Meath said it was the greatest worry imaginable. It was always turning up in a mysterious manner in his room just as he came in in a hurry to do some important work, and it was a heavily finable punishment to keep it more than a certain time. Besides, it wasn't as if it was a true record of their speeches, for who could expect them to remember the rubbish they spoke a week afterwards? Of course they were obliged to compose speeches to write down, and the result was that though their speeches were not much to hear, they were very beautiful to look at. No word of less than four syllables allowed seemed to be the rule; but there were exceptions to it; I looked into the book once and saw "No" for "know." It was to go down to posterity as a memorial of the Society, but personally I should say, if asked, that it would be better if it didn't, as the book formed a collection of handwritings and spelling about which the less said the better. Everybody hated the book. This could be seen by the way the records of the debates had diminished. The first filled thirty pages, the last seven. So Meath said the sooner somebody reformed them the better. Wanted; some choice spirits.

CHAPTER XVI.

PEVENSEY'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

THE first thing to be observed about this Autobiography is that it isn't really one at all—that is, if it is necessary, as I believe is the case, that the autobiography of a person should be

written by himself. Meath tried to represent this to Pevensey when he asked him to write his autobiography; but there was not the slightest use trying to knock out an idea that he had once taken into his head, and now his idea was that he must have an autobiography, and he didn't care whether he wrote it himself or any one else did it for him—an autobiography it was to be.

Meath had had to give Pevensey up as a bad job a long time ago, as he had found he couldn't do anything towards getting him on in his work, and trying to do so only kept himself back in his own, so he had abandoned him to his own devices. These latter were very numerous, Pevensey resorting to a series of dodges for doing his work, which he seemed to regard as infallible, and vastly superior to the every-day plan of getting it done in good time. He appeared to become inspired with a new dodge for making himself work, as he said, about every other day; and he used to come into Meath's room, and consume an enormous amount of valuable time in expatiating on the latent beauties of these dodges. This, that he called his Autobiography dodge, was one of them.

He had already before tried a diary of the largest dimensions, in which he had set forth in a kind of preface that it was "to be a record of all he did, said, or thought in the course of every day, so that, remembering that it was to be kept as a memorandum (? memorial) for the future of how he had lived at Eton, he should be checked when about to do anything wrong by the thought that he would be compelled to enter something therein that he might hereafter be ashamed of." This was a very laudable resolution on Pevensey's part, and, if carried out, no doubt would have succeeded in its purpose; but after the first two days, during which he stayed out to get into practice in putting down "all he did, said, or thought," his entries gradually dwindled down, until they became restricted to a few "thoughts" of the most commonplace description:—"Weather beastly;" "5d.," which he

explained meant that he had played at fives; "Jolly day;" "Out beagling;" "ditto as yesterday;" or the like. Soon after that it stopped altogether, and some new dodge took its place.

The autobiography dodge came into his head thus. He took up some one's autobiography in the library, and read the first sentence, which was something of this sort:—"Feeling it my duty that this my life should be written."—"Hang it all," said Pevensey, "why shouldn't my life be written? If I felt there was some one putting down all I did, I'm sure I should be much steadier. Bunter, old fellow, it wouldn't be much trouble; I wish you'd write my autobiography. It'll be an awfully good dodge."

Meath naturally made some objections, first on the ground that it was impossible for him to write somebody else's autobiography, and secondly, that it would take up too much of his time; but Pevensey quashed the first in the way already shown, and as for the second, he said that surely jotting down a few things now and then, especially if Meath only restricted his entries to his faults and failures, which were what he chiefly required should be recorded "to keep him steady," couldn't take up so much time as all that. As Meath happened to be staying out at the time with a severe cold, and regular work was out of the question while he was perpetually either sneezing or blowing his nose, he consented to do this for Pevensey just so long as his cold lasted, but on the sole condition that it should go on no longer after he got well. However, Pevensey was so sanguine about this latest plan for getting himself into the right path, that he hardly thought it would be necessary. He just wanted to start with "a good week," and he was sure he could get into the swing of it. Meath was given the remains of the diary to write in, and it began the next day. The result was the following document, and I have just put down these few particulars at the beginning because they may be worth referring to here-

after, should Pevensey ever become famous, and people come hunting up relics of him after his decease.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

(as kept by Meath).

Monday.

9.0 a.m.—The state of affairs is tranquil. Pevensey is feeding. No further particulars from the scene of action.

11.0 a.m.—Pevensey has been down to construing, and while there has been inspired with a new dodge. He has spent the last half-hour since construing in trying to point out all its advantages to me. He has come to the conclusion, after much self-consultation, that the reason he couldn't work before was because he was always getting *pœnas*, and so, without considering that prevention is better than cure, and that he might possibly, if he tried, refrain from getting them at all, he appears to have taken it for granted that they are a necessary part of his existence, and accordingly has formed plans to prevent them interfering with his work. He has concocted a most splendid dodge, as he calls it. It is to write out the first Georgic, not because it has been set him, but because, he said, "if he had the lines ready, there, it won't matter how many are set him, they won't interfere with his work." The main point of this "patent *pœna*," as he designates it—and he is very proud of his ingenuity—is, that it is all to be done in his leisure moments and isn't to hinder his work at all. I have been in vain arguing that if he keeps steady he will have no need of *pœnas;* one might as well try to argue to a post. Now he has gone to get ready for eleven o'clock school.

12.20 p.m.—I had hoped that after twelve we should have seen some of the new resolutions beginning to be carried out, but when Pevensey came in he had evidently been inwardly triumphing over the anticipated discomfiture of

the masters during the whole of school, and he felt it his duty to come and try to make me share in his delight. "You see," he said, "then it'll be such a jolly sell for any of the masters. They'll go and set me a *pœna*, and they'll think they've got me in such a jolly hole, and that they've put me all back in my work and got me into trouble generally; well, I just go back to my room, open my burry, take out my patent *pœna*, take it into school, and there you are! no more bother about it! Oh! it'll be a glorious sell!" Then I said, "But how did he know they would set him a Georgic?" and he went away to think about that.

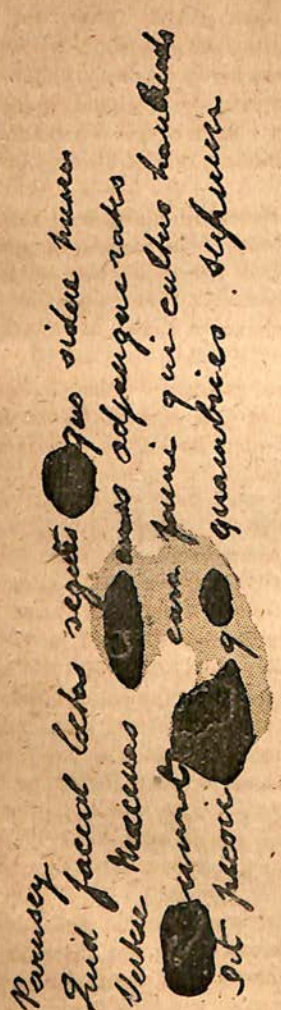
1.0 p.m.—I have just been to Pevensey's room to get some particulars to enter in my report of his proceedings. From the clothes lying about he appears to have received an invitation from some one to play fives, which he has accepted. At any rate, he isn't there.

3.0 p.m.—Pevensey gave me a wink full of all sorts of hidden meanings at dinner, but spoke not a word. Nothing more seen of him.

5.0 p.m.—Pevensey went up town after three o'clock school to get a patent pen to do the patent *pœna*. He says it is warranted to write—let's see—thirty pages of foolscap, I think he said, in one dip. He has borrowed an ink-pot and five sheets of paper from me and has retired, as he says, to begin the *pœna*, but I have a strong impression that I can hear him playing passage fives overhead.

7.0 p.m.—Another improvement on the *pœna* dodge. It is to be divided into sections of a hundred lines each, so that it will not only serve as a Georgic, but also will be useful if he gets a hundred lines—a very usual amount for a master to set.

8.30 p.m.—I have just been again to see how Pevensey is getting on. Some attraction has lured him from his room for a time, but he has written about a section and a half already. Somehow or other the patent pen doesn't seem to



be altogether a success. It evidently acts very well in so far as it takes up a good deal of ink at a time, but it seems as if it had a way of putting it down rather suddenly, that has a tendency to mar the general effect. The Facsimile of the Georgic will be found on this page.

If there exists an Eton master who will take this sort of thing, my belief in their forbearance as a class will be considerably increased.

10.15 p.m.—I am just going to bed, but will jot down the last of Pevensey for to-day. He didn't go down to supper so as to be able to give more time to his *pœna*. But I think he might as well, as he spent quite as much time as he would have down at supper, in my room feeding on the slops allowed me as an invalid. He has just been in here to inform me triumphantly that he has done 300 lines, more than half the Georgic, and he intends sitting up to-night till he has finished it. As for his proper work, he seems to have forgotten all about it.

Tuesday.

8.45 a.m.—Pevensey has been in while I was dressing, to

report his latest proceedings. It appears that he sat up so late last night to finish his *pœna* that he overslept himself this morning. Consequently he has incurred a pœna, but it is one of fifty lines, and so the system of the sectional Georgic is not adapted to it. But he says if he waits, it will be sure to be doubled, and then he can show up one of his sets of a hundred lines.

12.30 p.m.—What became of Pevensey after ten I don't know. The master, he is up to being of a lenient disposition, increased the *pœna* by half at eleven o'clock school. Seventy-five lines doesn't suit Pevensey's plan yet, so he is going to wait a little longer. I believe he has at last settled down to do some regular work.

9.30 p.m.—Beagling, tea, and a gossip in other fellows' rooms have constituted the rest of P.'s actions for to-day (N.B. I wonder what he will say when he knows how faithfully I have entered all he has done).

Wednesday.

9.0 a.m.—*Pœna* increased to a hundred and fifty lines, I advised Pevensey to write another fifty lines and show it up with one of his sections, and so have done with it, but he is so determined that his dodge shall succeed that he won't resort to any other means of doing the *pœna* until he has made use of it. Still he is getting rather anxious. However, he consoles himself with the idea that in time the *pœna* must develope into a Georgic, "and," he says, "you see nine times out of ten they set one the first Georgic, so that it'll be all right in the end."

1.0 p.m.—Pevensey is out taking a little fresh air. I have not seen him after twelve to hear any more about how the *pœna* is getting on.

4.30 p.m.—Pevensey has received warning that if the *pœna* is not forthcoming at five o'clock school it is to become a Georgic. He is rather happy about this than otherwise

repeating his self-assurance that now "it will come all right as nine times out of ten they set the first Georgic."

6.30 p.m.—The rage of P. is something appalling. I suppose this must have just been the tenth time, as it is not the first but the fourth Georgic that has been set him. Well, he says he's done the Georgic, and what can it matter which one it is? He doesn't believe the master cares a bit. He'll show up his first Georgic, and risk it. He has gone to do some regular work now.

Thursday.

12.30 p.m.—Pevensey has kept out of my way all the morning. When I went in to see after him I found him sitting in very low spirits. He tried showing up his patent *pœna*, but the master didn't seem to see it, and so now he has lost the *pœna*, and has to do half another Georgic for not showing up the right one. Besides this, he is all in arrears with his ordinary work. He is very despondent, and when I tried to console him he threw out dark hints that he shall go out this afternoon, and if I hear of any stray article, such as a corpse, being picked up below Windsor Bridge, I shall know whom it belongs to.

4.30 p.m.—Pevensey has indeed gone out, but it is with the beagles.

9.30 p.m.—P. has spent the evening trying to borrow an alarum for a new dodge. He is not going to bed to-night, but is going to take his rest on a chair, so that, as he says, he will not have the temptations of his couch to keep him from getting up early to get his work done. He has got an alarum from one of the lower boys, and has set it for 2.30 a.m. I have just looked into his room. He has blown his candle out and composed himself to sleep in his arm-chair. When I asked him how he was getting on he only replied in a solemn tone, "Early to bed and early to rise," and relapsed into silence.

Friday.

9.0 a.m.—Pevensey's adventures with the alarum have been rather curious. To begin with, it went off twice to its full extent twice before its time, once just as he was going to sleep (and just as I was, too, for the matter of that, for it disturbed me), and once at about 12.30, when it woke him up, and he had to set it again. Then it seems that it kept up a succession of little spasmodic jerks every half hour or so all through the night, and the result was that Pevensey hadn't had much sleep when, at the fated hour of 2.30 a.m., it gave vent to a final outburst, and jigged gracefully off the mantelpiece on to the floor, crashing itself to atoms in the act. Pevensey picked up the pieces, but refuses to give any further account of his proceedings. My firm belief is that, finding himself with the fire out and very cold and sleepy, he divested himself of his garments and turned into bed, as that is where I found him at half-past eight this morning, he having had recourse to the last expedient of the destitute, namely, staying out.

My cold is much better, and so I am going in at chapel, after having been out four days. I can't keep the auto-biography any more, now I have returned to my own duties.

We are now three-parts through the week, and it doesn't seem to have turned out quite such a "good one" as Pevensey anticipated.

No further bulletins will be issued.

CHAPTER XVII.

MARCH THE FIRST.

MARCH THE FIRST came, one of Eton's great days. On this day the aquatic season commences, and on this day it chooses to drizzle more than any other day of the year, in the same way that it thunders and lightens on the Fourth of

June, and snows on St. Andrew's Day, the festivity days of the other two halves.

Several of Meath's tutor's fellows had got into the boats this year. Those that had were very proud of themselves; those that hadn't consoled themselves by saying that the whole thing was a beastly system of favouring. Pevensey got in amongst others, and he wanted Meath to come and view his performances on the way up to Surley from the bank. But Meath was too old a bird. He had attended his first three Firsts of March in the most loyal manner, and had had enough of them. They were always the same. No cheering or joyous merriment of light-hearted boys, like one reads of in books, but a procession, rather funereal than otherwise, of boats, manned by fellows with soaked straw hats dripping down their noses, who look as if they were rowing under compulsion, and attended by a great success in the crab-fishery. A few non-performers, looking on for want of something better to do, complete the programme. It might be enjoyment for the wet-bobs, but Meath was a dry-bob, and as such preferred remaining such. So, as his umbrella had gone to be repaired, he stayed at home after twelve, and did not grace the Brocas with his presence.

On the First of March hare-hunting ends; at least, so the almanack says. That accounts for the fact of hare-hunting not ending at Eton. We never do anything the same as the rest of the world at Eton. We take pride in being a little world of ourselves. On the First of March hare-hunting takes a fresh start. The fellows who have got into the boats give up beagling, and half-price tickets are issued to supply their places. Thus a new set appears in the hunting-field, and very few of the old ones are left. Meath was one of the old ones, and he felt like a veteran hunter amongst the rising young blood of a new generation.

Stortford was one of the newly joined. He went out for the first time that day, and was initiated into the mysteries

of the chase under Meath's auspices. He wanted to know a great deal about the right etiquette to be observed, and Meath felt very proud to give him all the information in his power as the veteran sportsman. Only he got too independent after a time, and didn't consult Meath about things as he would have liked, but took them for granted. Luckily for him they were right, but still Meath did not like being passed over in that way.

The meet was at the Butts. Meath condescended to wait for Stortford to conduct him there, but he was so eager for the chase that he would not attend to Meath's assurances that there was no hurry, and so got there before him. Meath came leisurely up just as the others had finished poking about in a field of wet turnips, and had got their boots and stockings soaked, as if they had been wading about in the river. He left it to the young blood to do that. The proper Master was not hunting the beagles that day, having gone for leave, or somewhere, and his deputy didn't do it half so well. They found about two fields away from the Butts, and went away at a tearing pace towards Dorney. Meath didn't trouble himself to keep up with them. He had given that up a long time ago. He didn't find it pay to follow in the track of the beagles half so well as to keep his ears open and make out a series of short cuts to the places where they were likely to pass by. Then he used to follow them a little way, and then take another short cut, and so get up to them, and so on. That was the way he did his hunting now, and he found that by short cuts and checks, and the various other little attendant incidents of the chase, he saw a great deal more of the hounds than by hunting them themselves, besides improving his mathematical faculties by the calculation of angles.

So on this occasion he started off at a leisurely trot after the hounds, while Stortford pounded away like a young thoroughbred, and was soon out of sight with the rest of the

field. The hounds seemed to be going straight ahead at first, so Meath thought he would have to depend on a check instead of a short cut, and trotted on calmly expecting that event. He came to what looked like a little drain in the middle of a field, and hopped across it without giving much care to whether he got right across or not, as he didn't think it would more than cover his boot at the outside. But he didn't get right across, and it did a great deal more than cover his boot; it covered the whole of his leg. There was a great treacherous hole just where he had hopped, and he went right in, and got soaked. So he considered it best to get dry. After he had run and run, and was beginning to feel in a slightly more arid condition, he came to a big brook. He stood and looked at this brook for some time, and thought how he could get over. He didn't want to get wet again—the fresher joined and more ardent could do that, and he wasn't certain if he could get across without doing so. While he was hesitating, one of the fellows, who had only begun subscribing that day, came rushing up in a great hurry, as if he was going to catch a train, and called out to Meath to ask if he thought he could jump it. Meath said he had never seen him jump, so he couldn't tell, but he had better try, and judge for himself by the result. So he tried, and landed in the water, about three-quarters of the way over. However, he scrambled out, and didn't seem to mind much. He was only a fresh hand, and hadn't had so much of that sort of thing as Meath. When he got older perhaps some of his ardour would leave him.

However, that settled Meath, and he determined not to risk the jump. Then he cast about for some means of getting over, and, looking around, he espied a willow-tree, which overhung nearly to the other bank. He thought if he could get on this he could easily reach the other side, and accordingly scrambled up to the top of the tree. But it was one of the pollarded ones, with only two upright branches

sticking out of the top. He had to squeeze through these, and then jump immediately. Unhappily he missed the right moment, and as soon as he had passed through them, they closed with a snap behind him, and shot him into the water. There he was, just as wet as ever, and he had to run violently again to dry himself.

He found the hounds after a little time enjoying a check, with the fellows all sitting down watching them, while the deputy master was running up and down, making unintelligible outcries in the hope of doing something.

Stortford joined him here and asked him what he thought of it. He said that as a veteran he didn't think much of t; it wasn't the sort of hunting he had been used to when he first ran. Stortford tried to sneer, and remarked something about "wetter-uns," but which Meath supposes he intended a pun at his expense, but he wouldn't encourage him by seeing it, and he went away, and Meath saw him among a group of other fellows struggling to lead the conversation up to his joke. Meath felt amply revenged; if there is anything humiliating, it is trying to bring out a joke when the other fellows won't say the right thing. Stortford is always coming to grief in this way, but he has such an irresistible propensity for punning that he will sometimes stoop to saying, "Oh, but if you had said so-and-so," and then work in his repartee. He has no shame whatever, Meath says.

After a little time one of the hounds found some scent and off they started over exactly the same line of country as they had come before. It struck Meath as exceedingly probable that they had got on the old scent again; it was highly likely in this inferior style of hunting. So he didn't hurry after them, but sat on the bank he had been occupying and watched them out of sight. Then he thought he would like to go and look with pity on the poor wretches' mistake, so he got up, shook himself and prepared to follow them. Just as he was starting, he perceived a movement under a large dock-

leaf, and on further examination it turned out to be the hare, comfortably sitting still and arranging her whiskers. Meath did not wish to interrupt a lady in her toilette, so he sat down again on a bank opposite, and watched her. When she had done she looked up and saw him. There must have been something in his countenance, he supposed, that re-assured her, for she didn't attempt to run away, but they sat and gazed at each other for some time without moving. After this had gone on for a little time, she winked in a confidential manner at Meath—he is sure she did—just as much as to say, "You and I are used to something better than this sort of hunting, aren't we?" and Meath saw immediately that she was willing to make friends. He was just about to make further advances, and approached nearer to her, with a view to improving their aquaintance, when the sound of the returning pursuers was heard in the distance, and so, waving an adieu to him with her paw, she was off. She had hardly gone a minute, when the enraged field arrived, looking very much crestfallen at the sell they had experienced. Meath felt his superiority more and more every minute. They asked him if he had seen the hare, and so although she was his friend, as he thought she had got enough start by this time, he told them which way she had gone. Then the whole of them trotted away in that direction, and presently the beagles got on the scent again, the right scent this time, and Meath went with them to encourage them by his patronage. Somehow or other, however, he got left behind again, and so he began to slacken off, and let Linwood, who was going along at much the same pace, come up with him. Linwood had come to the same conclusion as himself, that the run wasn't worth troubling about, so they gave up running and walked along conversing on various topics. Meath had once thought Linwood was an ass, but now he had found that there was a great deal more in him than he had thought, he said: he was a very sensible fellow. When he felt that he was getting too

frivolous from associating with Stortford, Pevensey and Co., he used to go and have some sober conversation with Linwood, and then when he felt he was becoming too æsthetic he used to go back to the companionship of S. P. and Co., and in this way he preserved the balance in a judicious manner.

As Linwood and he were walking leisurely along, and detailing their views on the Eastern Question, they suddenly met the hare coming round a corner. Meath assured Linwood there was no danger, as the hare was an old acquaintance of his, and she would do them no harm. The poor creature seemed much distressed, and looked at Meath with eyes of reproach for having betrayed her to her adversaries. He felt quite sorry for her, but he had only done his duty as one of the hunters, and he was going to say something to that effect when the hounds came round the corner and demolished her before his very eyes. He could have wept, he said, only it would have looked so odd out there in the field, so he refrained. There was one comfort; she was soon out of her pain and distributed in fragments all over the field in no time, as the hounds came in so long before the deputy-master or any of the whips, that they saved them any trouble in the way of cutting her up. Meath felt quite depressed about that poor hare for a long time. He took quite an interest in her. And to think that after they had made such a lot of mistakes about her, those half-price fellows should have killed her by a fluke after all!

The hounds had got quite unruly and would not hearken to the voice of the hireling in charge of them or any one else. They got hold of the ends of the bones of Meath's late lamented friend and ran about fighting among the crowd of bystanders, and getting entangled in their legs in the most hopeless state of confusion. Oh! it was a sad sight for one who was used to the orderliness of the hunting-field!

When the hounds had made an end of their debauch the master called them off, and seemed very proud of himself for

having succeeded, though Meath didn't believe he'd have done it if there had been anything more to eat, and then they tried to find again. But the pack had become hopelessly demoralized; part started off in one direction after a rabbit, and the other part in the other direction after a big black cur that appeared in the distance. The more inexperienced seemed to think it was all right, and followed quite contented with such mercies; but then they'd only paid half-money; Meath had paid all, and expected his money's worth. And he considered that the hare hadn't been treated fairly; and it was drizzling, and altogether he felt out of sorts, so he came home and got the bath first.

When he was about half-way through his ablutions the rest of the hunters came in, each thinking he would be the first to get the bath; but the veteran had been too sagacious, and he sat in the warm water and enjoyed himself and jeered at them. Then they tried stratagem, and holloed through the door that his tutor wanted to see him at absence, and that he was to come down as he was, and not to keep him waiting; but Meath said that was impossible, as he had nothing on but a towel. When he had finished he came out and they all rushed in in a body. How they settled he didn't know, but at half-past seven he passed by the door of the bath, and there was still a string of young blood sitting in a row out in the passage with their towels and sponges waiting their turn.

Stortford came in to tea very late, full of his first run, but Meath could not join in his pleasure; something stopped him. Beagling wasn't at all what it had been at the beginning of the half; he felt all on the side of the hares now. And, horrible to relate! he had discovered that one of their fags ran with them. What was to become of the social distinctions of the school if this sort of thing were tolerated? Eton would be going to the dogs through the dogs. He thought he would abandon beagles, as most of the first subscribers

seemed to have done, and take to fives. Hares go mad in March; do beagles too? Or why did they go after that big black dog?

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ADVENT OF PEVENSEY MINOR.

PEVENSEY minor, the long expected one, who was to make his appearance for certain every other day, at last arrived rather past the middle of the half. But Meath was cruelly deceived in his expectations. From the way in which the major had been used to speak of him, he had pictured to himself a timid little fellow, who would hardly have a word to say for himself, and who would be grateful even if anybody looked at him with anything but eyes of unkindness; the sort of fellow towards whom one would feel so kind if one noticed him, in fact quite the ideal type of the new fellow. Pevensey had always talked of him as if he would require so much looking after, and Meath was fully prepared, and indeed was rather looking forward to the day in which he could manifest his friendship to Pevensey by helping him all he could in taking care of this precious minor of his.

But now that he had turned up, Pevensey minor was a very different style of article. He was quite as tall, if not quite so broad as his major, and, indeed, if they were to have had a stand-up fight, Meath said he would be sorry to have to say which he should prefer laying his money on. So far from his requiring any looking after by his major, he showed signs of being perfectly capable of looking after himself, if not of his major as well; and as to not having anything to say for himself, on the contrary, Pevensey minor had a great deal to say for himself, and a great deal to say for other people for the matter of that—besides having a broad grin, which he made use of on every opportunity good or bad, without the least reference to whether the occasion was suit-

able for broad grins. Meath expressed his disappointment —for it was a disappointment—to Pevensey at having this sort of creature with arms and legs waving all over the place, palmed off upon him instead of the quiet little fellow that he was going to be so kind to, and take so under his patronage, the sort of thing he had been led to expect from Pevensey's description of his minor, but the latter accounted for it by saying "Yes, the minor was an awful one to grow; he was in the habit of growing at the rate of about five inches in two months." Pevensey minor was at that time about five foot eight, and according to his major, hadn't done growing yet; so where he was going to reach to by the time he had done, Meath said, goodness only knew.

Meath felt compromised in a sort of way in Pevensey minor, because his people had been very civil to him. It appears that when the day was fixed for his coming, Pevensey's papa and mamma thought it would be a nice opportunity for making a little trip down to Eton, and accordingly they wrote to their heir-apparent to announce their intended visit. Pevensey did not receive the news with that delight which might have been expected; on the contrary, he rather looked forward to the day with dread, lest his people should come in contact with any of his preceptors. He weighed in his mind if he had been so very bad lately, and he prepared for the worst by arranging, and trying to get Meath to help him to arrange, what he could say in his defence. Meath told him that if he were in his place, he wouldn't bother himself about it, his people were not likely to be coming down to find out about his sins, and all that sort of thing, and so he somewhat comforted him. But that was not all of the contents of their letter to Pevensey. In the kindness of their hearts they thought it necessary to rummage out all the fellows whom they knew about, or whose people they knew about, and get them leave for the day. What they proposed to do with them nobody knew, only I suppose they thought it

would be a treat for the fellows to get leave, without considering how they could make them further enjoy themselves. So they commissioned Pevensey to find out these fellows, and let them know what to do, where to meet his people, and all that. To Meath's great surprise he was one of these favoured ones. It seemed according to Pevensey that his mother knew some one, who knew some one else, who had heard a good deal about Meath from a distant cousin of his, or something of that sort, and so his name being brought somehow into her notice, he was included in the list of invitations. Pevensey was "to find a boy named Meath"—the writer little knew he was so near—and then followed a long list of names, the owners of which Pevensey was to seek out and direct what to do. It was with great satisfaction that he scratched out Meath's name as "done for," in his list, and then set to work writing notes to fellows he had never heard of before, and whom he had to ferret out, with the aid of the school-list as in a dictionary, putting a line through each name in his list, with a grunt of relief, as he disposed of it. The lower boys at his tutor's had a busy time of it for about four days before the great event came off, trotting up and down with Pevensey's many little notes.

There was one fellow that gave him a good deal of trouble. His name was Smith—no further information was given about him. Pevensey was to find out a boy called Smith; that's what the letter said. He was in great distress about this Smith. He came to Meath, and said, "You see, I don't see what I can do. There are such a lot of Smiths. I can't ask them all, because there would be too many. And I can't write to each separately, and ask him if he is the right Smith. I think I shall have to give him up; there'll be plenty of other fellows, and I dare say my people won't notice." So it was decided that no further search should be made after poor Smith.

At last the day arrived, and Pevensey's heart again sank

with the fear of his people running against his tutor, and that his tutor would have some awful tale of his crimes to communicate. He even tried to suggest that as Meath was known to his people, he should go to the station to receive them, while he should himself be detained on urgent business somewhere else. Of course Meath ridiculed the notion, so Pevensey screwed up his courage, and they went up town together to meet his people, he brooding over his proposed line of defence, and looking much more like a culprit going to be hanged than a schoolboy going to pass a happy day with his parents.

When they got to the station they found several other fellows waiting about there, evidently Pevensey's people's *protégés*, all ready at the appointed rendezvous. No two of them knew each other, and each was engaged in the study of a different advertisement, and wishing that the other would speak first. To make matters worse, Pevensey didn't know which was which himself; and though Meath told him that it was his duty to assemble them in a body in readiness for the reception of his people, he evidently was nervous, and wouldn't. Consequently, when the train did arrive, no one but Pevensey knew who were the right people. "There!" he said, and gave Meath a great shove that tumbled him into an inquiring gentleman of alien and unlaved appearance who got out of a carriage, and proceeded immediately to open a guide-book, and read aloud, for the benefit of Madame *Chose*, who was following, that "Vindsore, vun of ze finest places of residence of ze Qveen of Inglande, is situéed in Burkshyre, It is divided from Eton by ze rivayre Thames, and is not far distant from ze town of Sluff." When Meath had somewhat recovered from his surprise that Pevensey should never have told him that he was of foreign extraction, he was on the point of shaking hands with these people as cordially as he could, when Pevensey pulled him back violently, and presented him to a benevolent-looking elderly gentleman, who,

accompanied by an equally benevolent-looking lady and a pokery sort of youth, got out of the next carriage.

When Meath had been formally introduced, Mr. Pevensey and his junior olive-branch went to find the luggage, while Mrs. Pevensey, P., and Meath were left standing, waiting for them. Then Pevensey's difficulties began. His mother naturally inquired where the other *protégés* were. If Pevensey had done as Meath told him, and had mustered them all together, there would have been no trouble; but now he had to rush about, asking every Eton fellow there if he had come to meet a person of the name of Mr. Pevensey. Some had, but some hadn't, and utterly ignored any connexion with the party in question; but at last a troop of about five strong was got together, and as the luggage had been found, and arrangements made for sending it down to college, Mr. Pevensey now proposed that they should walk up town, so that he might regale his eyes with all his old Eton associations; so they started in a sort of triumphal procession. Meath went first, escorting Mrs. Pevensey, who seemed to have taken a fancy to him, probably because he was the first introduced to her; Pevensey followed, with his father and the minor, and the other fellows, all looking very shy and uncomfortable, brought up the rear, none of them walking exactly with each other, but in a sort of confused heap, and none of them speaking.

But before they had got well out of the station, the vigilant eye of Mrs. Pevensey detected the absence of the boy Smith. Smith was the son of a lady friend of hers, and she soon missed him, and began to make inquiries after him. Pevensey, who had been congratulating himself hitherto that his negligence had been unobserved, now tried to make excuses; but his mother wouldn't hear them, and appealed to Meath as to whether he didn't consider Pevensey the stupidest of all boys. Meath thought this was rather hard, but he didn't exactly know what to say; so he replied that he was afraid it wasn't

entirely Pevensey's fault, as there might be some difficulty in finding the required individual, because there were a good many of that name about. "But surely," said Mrs. Pevensey, "you know Smith, Tommy Smith—a little pale boy, with funny green eyes?" Meath had still to plead ignorance, but then he suddenly thought of a way out of the dilemma. He asked her if she knew where Smith boarded. No, she didn't know that; she only knew Tommy Smith was at Eton, and she had promised his mother to be kind to him when she came down to Eton. Meath felt he went down several pegs in her estimation by his gross display of ignorance. However, he somewhat regained her favour by the brilliant suggestion that they should attend absence, when no doubt she would be able to identify Smith among the nine hundred odd other fellows there assembled. This satisfied her, and they moved on in the direction of Eton, and opened the road to the traffic which they had obstructed in the course of the discussion.

As they passed Layton's, Mr. Pevensey was seized with the idea that it was necessary for the happiness of their existence to go in and eat ices, so they turned in there for that purpose. Then he desired the party to order each what they liked, and thereby made the other fellows all look as if he had invited them to partake of a little poison. At last one and then another summoned up courage to ask the waiter for their strawberry ices, for they all ordered strawberry ices from shyness, because Pevensey and Meath had, and then the rest followed suit, and set to work to eat them in silence, in spite of Mr. Pevensey's efforts to draw them out, all he could get out of most of them being timid monosyllables. When they had finished he pressed them to have some more, but Pevensey and Meath refused, so, of course, the others all refused too, and they rose up and proceeded on their way up town in the same order as before.

Mrs. Pevensey talked a great deal, and required much

information on all sorts of subjects relating to the bodily comfort of her youngest. She evidently had no very high opinion of her other one, for she explained to Meath, by way of apology for asking him so many questions, that "Charley was so tiresome; he never would sit down quietly and tell her all she wanted to know about Eton. He always wanted to be about." Meath turned round at that moment to see that they had not got on too far ahead of the others, and Pevensey gave him a look out of the corner of his eye as much as to say, "It's all right, so far, the governor hasn't been doing any jawing yet."

Mr. Pevensey was in great force, and had a great deal to say about all the places they passed with reference to his old Eton days. He knew exactly who had had all the different shops, and he had anecdotes to tell about all of them, deploring any alteration for better or worse that had taken place in the arrangement of the street since his time. He made great use of his umbrella in pointing out the objects as he mentioned them, and whenever he thought of a particularly brilliant idea that he thought might interest his lady, he ran on to repeat it to her; "I was telling the boys, my dear, that in my time—." Occasionally he stopped in the middle of the pavement till the rest felt themselves obliged to collect round him, while he enlarged on some special object of interest, and so in time they arrived in college.

Then, of course, they had to parade through Hall and the Schools, in getting the keys of which Meath gained great glory by his exertions, to see the block, about which Pevensey expressed much curiosity, as if it was something entirely new to him; then they went for a stroll in the playing fields, which looked very dismal, and finally arrived at the tutor's. The shyness had a little worn off the tail of the party, and Meath noticed that one or two of them had made some slight efforts towards conversation, though they still looked as if

they would have liked to take refuge in their boots whenever Mr. or Mrs. Pevensey spoke to, or even looked at them. As for Smith, no one seemed to think anything more about him.

Then they went up to Pevensey's room. Some of the fellows had the good sense to shake hands at the door, murmur their gratitude at being asked out for leave, and escape, but some more stupidly hung on to the party and came upstairs and dawdled about, feeling themselves in everybody's way. Pevensey hurried his people through the passages as if he was ashamed of them, and didn't wish to run the risk of their being seen by any of his tutor's fellows that might be about. When they got to Pevensey's room, Meath thought the time had arrived for anything private to be said, so he was preparing to take his leave, but Mrs. Pevensey wanted him as *Cicerone*, and wouldn't hear of it. So he had to stop and assist her in her exclamations of astonishment at Pevensey's apartment, which for a wonder he had with Meath's aid made a little more like order, though if the top bureau drawer had by chance been opened, a good deal of the illusion would have been dispelled. Then they spent the rest of the afternoon sitting or lounging on various articles of furniture, and listening to Mr. Pevensey's anecdotes of his adventures at Eton. It is worthy of remark what a much more enterprizing set the past generation were than what we are, and what a lot of escapades they were always getting into. They must have had two or three reserve Eights and Elevens to accommodate all the old Eton men who were in either the one or the other—or else just one out. I wonder if we shall have the same degree of superiority over the next lot and so on. Meath says he shall be leaving soon, so it really is time for him to begin to have some adventures, so that he can have a stock of anecdotes ready when he comes down to Eton—"Oh, there used to be a fellow in my division, ah, ha! I remember it so well"—and so on.

Then the bell began to ring for chapel and Mrs. Pevensey

insisted on Meath conducting her to hear the anthem. Mr. Pevensey was irreverent, and wouldn't come. After that they returned to tea in Pevensey's room, his idea of an appropriate meal for his parents being muffins and sausages. Then a fly was procured and they departed.

Meath left the major and minor alone at first to say all that he thought would necessarily be said at that fraternal meeting, but when after a while he heard sounds rather of abuse than affection through the wall, he threw off all feelings of delicacy and went into their room, where he spent the rest of the evening admiring the minor's evident determination not to submit to any imposition on the part of the major. He had already made himself quite at home, and it was clear he wouldn't require much petting or caring for—rather the other way.

CHAPTER XIX.

PEVENSEY THE ORDERLY.

In Meath's anxiety for Pevensey's welfare, he had long been endeavouring to impress upon him, that now he had arrived at a more elevated position in the school, he really ought to try and keep his room in more order, and although Pevensey always told him when he began on the subject to mind his own affairs, his constant upbraiding seemed at last to have some effect. Perhaps it was that Pevensey's conscience really pricked him at last; perhaps it was because he received a reinforcement in the way of funds on the arrival of his minor; but however that may have been, one day shortly after that event he announced, just as if it was a thing that had never occurred to him before, that he thought he might do something towards making his room look better. He said he had got tired of the old arrangement of the furniture, and he wanted some new pictures and ornaments

and things to make his room look jolly. Yes, he would stay out and have a regular field day.

Pevensey used to have a way—he said he was going to give it up now—but he used to have a way of coming in from school and throwing down his books anywhere, it didn't much matter, so that the accumulation of books and papers all over the place got to be something appalling. As it was hopeless for him to try and find anything in this state of things, he used, when he was in a hurry, to go into school to borrow some one else's books, and then when he came out, if the owner of the said books didn't look very sharp after them, down they went to add to the heap. The result was that the room was about as perfect an ideal of chaos as could be imagined. Even the boys' maid, with the innate love of her species for "putting things in order," which one would have thought she had a glorious opportunity of exercising here, had given it up as a bad job and only swept out the dust without trying to move anything. Meath was half inclined to think that it was fear of the books on the window-sill arising to such a height that all light would be blotted out, that at last opened Pevensey's eyes to the desirability of his room being tidied.

The room in question was next to Meath's, and being a double room was rather bigger than the others. It was about sixteen by nine feet in dimensions, and around the walls were scattered in graceful confusion different articles of furniture; two beds, two bureaus, two chairs, a table, an ottoman, two washing stands, an arm-chair, two book cupboards, one sock-ditto, and Pevensey's bath, the edge of which he as frequently made use of to sit on as of the chairs, which were usually occupied with books or mathematical instruments. His pictures, of which he had once had a very decent array, had dwindled down to a very limited number through the various casualties of his daily life, and his ornaments were only conspicuous by their absence. Altogether

he came to the conclusion, after making a sort of inventory of his possessions, "that there was plenty of room, and plenty of material for improvement."

So he stayed out. After twelve he made no movement towards the commencement of his operations, and Meath began to expect that this good resolution was going the way of all its predecessors; but after two he deposited a chair in the only vacant space in the middle of the room, and taking his seat thereon, like Marius among the ruins of Carthage, proceeded to consider where he ought to begin. After sitting for about a quarter of an hour without speaking a word, but occasionally wagging his head three or four times in succession in a sagacious manner to express the deepness of his thoughts, he suddenly rose, and called on his minor to help. The minor wanted to know what he was to do, and was told "to hold his row and not bother." Then, with the impetuosity of one possessed, before one had time to realize the full import of the situation, Pevensey had pulled his table, both chairs, his ottoman, and all the rest of the more moveable furniture into the passage, and on these he piled all the miscellaneous articles that were lying about his room, thereby completely blocking up the passage, and causing great inconvenience to any one who wished to pass his door, Meath himself among the number. The whole of this was done in one breath, and when it was over he ejaculated, "There!" and threw himself into his chair to survey the result of his labours. Meath had to go into school then, so left him, begging him to have removed at least some part of his barricade by the time he returned.

But when he came out again it was still there, and its owner was again occupying his chair. He evidently was carrying out his operations on the fit system; he had had another fit while the others were in school, and under its influence had got down all the pictures, brackets, &c., off the walls, and added them to the hea outside; then he had

sat down again panting from his exertions, and was keeping on turning round and round in his chair, bowing in turn at each separate article of furniture that had been too heavy to move, or Meath believes he'd have had it all out in the passage, as he settled in his mind what to do with it. When Meath came in he uttered the monosyllable, "Come," jumped up, and motioned him to take hold of one side of one of the book cupboards, and before Meath exactly knew what he was doing, they had got first one and then the other of these on to their respective lower halves, and Pevensey had secured them by driving two large nails ingeniously into them in such a manner that they went through into the part below so as to effectually prevent all possibility of the drawers thereof being opened even by the owner, much less by any one else. Thus ended fit number three.

Fit number four was not able to be performed in such a dashing style. It consisted of moving the beds, and as Pevensey minor came in then, Meath left that to him, and remained a spectator during the rest of the proceedings. Moving the beds was a heavy job; it was effected by wobbling them along first one side, then the other, at the imminent risk, as it seemed to Meath, though Pevensey assured him there was no danger, of the whole thing falling flat in the middle of the room, until the desired point was attained. Meath was glad he had kept out of this, for in the last shove that Pevensey gave to each bed to settle it in the required position, he landed the first on his minor's toe, and getting him between the second and the wall, nearly reduced him to pulp before he could extricate himself.

After that he brought all the rest of his furniture out of the passage, and arranged it really with some regard for order, and then he sorted, or rather he superintended the sorting by his minor of the various books, and sent round consignments of those that didn't belong to him—and they were a good number—to their various owners by lower boys,

put the few that were his own in order in his cupboard, and then his room really did look tidy.

"To-morrow," he said, "we will get some pictures and ornaments, minor." The minor agreed.

Next day they sallied forth to make their investments, Pevensey having made his minor hand over half his money to what he called "the benefit of the community." In the evening the purchases arrived, and he was in a great state of excitement. He had got a new patent sort of arm-chair, warranted to shut up when one looked at it, and a set of four hunting-pictures, besides some new ornaments. The minor had also got his contingent of ornaments, a book-shelf, and a set of four hunting scenes. Pevensey dilated largely on the beauties of the pictures of his choice, and was in a tremendous hurry to undo the paper in which they were done up. Unfortunately his minor was in an equal hurry to display the wisdom of his selection, and they had a kind of race to see which should get his unpacked first. It resulted in a dead heat, and then—then came a proof of what Pevensey had been enlarging upon, namely, how nice it was that he and his minor were so much of the same tastes—they were two sets of exactly the same hunting pictures. Pevensey got furious at this, and first abused his minor, and then Meath, because he suggested that it wasn't more the minor's fault than his own; after that he said his minor must "take the consequences," though he didn't say what they were, and then he banged down into his new arm-chair, which immediately commenced a series of manœuvres for "stowing itself away into the smallest possible space," which the shopman had pointed out as the great advantage that it offered, and finally collapsed, pinching Pevensey very painfully in the course of its evolutions. Meath, seeing that a storm was likely to ensue, quitted for the rest of the evening.

Next day, when he went in, the finishing touches had been put to the room. One set of the hunting pictures had been

put up, the ornaments had been arranged, and a decided change for the better had come over the place. Pevensey, amongst other improvements, had put his new book-shelf in such a position near the door that, if you were of small stature, it knocked your hat over your eyes, or, if you were of middle height, it caught you in the eye. Meath asked him to alter it, but he said "it did well enough; he couldn't bother himself to change all his things because fellows didn't choose to look where they were going to." So it was left where it was, and to avoid danger to one's hat—perhaps to one's life—it was needful to remember to affect a crick of the neck towards the right previously to going in; but it required some practice. However, as Meath said, "forewarned was forearmed," so it was better to be prepared beforehand when one went to call upon Pevensey.

CHAPTER XX.

LEFT IN CHARGE.

THERE came an occasion, about this time, when somebody had been gaining laurels for himself, or had died, or done something or other, I don't exactly know what; but, at any rate, there was a holiday for it. They might as well have given us the holiday on a whole school-day, I think, while they were about it, instead of on a Saturday. But they always give us holidays on what are ordinary half-holidays, when they possibly can manage to. Meath rather believes they even shift about the saints to suit their convenience, because two or three times he has consoled himself for their coming on half-holidays by looking forward to their falling on whole school-days next year; but they never seem to, somehow.

Most of his tutor's fellows took advantage of the Saturday whole holiday to go for their long leave. The captain went; Vernant went; Sortell went; and Meath was left in command of about fifteen other of the more unfortunate, with

Pevensey as his *aide-de-camp*. He felt the responsibility of his position, and looked upon it as a sort of training in preparation for the time when he should be really captain of his tutor's.

His duties were not of a very arduous character, as his subjects were of a tolerably quiet disposition. The only ones who were likely to be unruly were Mardon and Pevensey. Pevensey made more row than any one else, in pretending to keep order; but, on the whole, the house had an air of desolation about it like the Deserted Village, as Meath poetically expressed it.

Meath stood at the door as the captain departed, expecting he would make him some appropriate address on giving up his power into his hands for the time being; but he was in such a hurry to catch his train that he didn't seem to think about it, and when Meath wished him good-bye, and added a remark about his hoping he would do his duty properly, only said, "Oh yes, all right," jumped into the fly, and drove off. Meath thought it was hardly the right thing to do on such an important occasion, but he supposed that the captain was so used to power that he didn't think much about it.

He had to preside at dinner and help. There was bubble-and-squeak for dinner, and the fellows took it into their heads to grumble because he gave some too much bubble, and others all squeak. However, he paid no attention to them. He was their captain now, and might judge what was good for them without consulting them. It was a privilege of power.

He had to have his tea in solitude, as Stortford had gone for leave among the rest, and after tea he sat in his room working and listening for any noise that might require to be stopped. Pevensey came in and sat himself down by the fire with a stump in his hand, on what he called the "*Kye Vyve*," ready to rush out with a yell on any unfortunate little

fellow who might even chance to leave his room to get a bit of paper or anything else. Pevensey had chosen to institute himself Meath's lieutenant, but his way of keeping order was calculated to make a great deal more disturbance than all the rest of the house put together.

About seven o'clock Meath began to wonder what all the other fellows were doing. There seemed to be some sort of assembly going on overhead, in Mardon's room; but they were not doing anything worse than talking, as it seemed, from what he heard down the chimney, so he didn't think it necessary to go up and disperse them. They seemed to be planning something. What if it should be a rebellion? An active ruler should keep a watch against all emergencies. He had done his work. He would go up and see. "Come along, Pevensey," he said, "let's go up and have a chat with those fellows."

Pevensey consented and they went up, Pevensey armed with his stump. Meath told him that if there was any disturbance, he was not to poke his nose into it, but to leave him to manage for himself. He didn't exactly know, though, what he was to do if they refused to obey him, but he hoped for the best. They opened the door and went in.

The assembly didn't seem to be doing much in the conspiracy line, as when Meath and Pevensey entered they were greeted with a shout of "Walk up, gentlemen, the more the merrier!" There were about eight of them already in the room, and the place was as hot as an oven. Meath told them not to make a row, as it was his business to see that they didn't. But they didn't seem to look upon his authority as seriously as they ought, and Mardon slapped him on the back in a most derogatory manner, and said, "Hurray! here's old Meath trying to be captain; make room, you fellows, give the place of honour to our noble captain." Then he shoved Meath unceremoniously into the arm-chair, and everybody laughed. It was no use making a row about it, Meath

thought—much better to take it in good part—as he asked them what they were talking about. They told him that they didn't see why the fellows who had gone for long leave should have all the luck, and go to theatres and all that sort of thing, so they had started an amateur dramatic society, and they were getting up a play. He might have a ticket if he liked.

He was perfectly willing, but he thought they ought to have asked him more ceremoniously, as being their captain, and gave them to understand so, by saying he didn't mind taking them under his patronage. They only laughed, and said "All right," in a tone that rather seemed to imply, "We don't particularly care about your partronage, but we'll take it as you do offer it," and then they asked him if he minded going downstairs, and they would let him know when it was all ready.

He told them to mind not make a row and went downstairs and waited in his room. Presently he heard sounds of preparation going on in the Poltons' room next door. Sounds as of chairs being dragged about—mysterious demands for fishing-rods—he supposed they must be going to act some modern farce—and then Linnat came into his room and asked him if he could lend them some string. Linnat was a great man at the drama; he was looked upon by the lower part of the house as equal to Garrick or Irving, or any of those great actors. Unfortunately Dawtrey, their funny actor, had gone away. Dawtrey was a great worshipper of Toole. He told Meath one day he especially admired him in tragic parts.

Meath lent Linnat the string, and asked him how long they were going to be. He said not long, they would be ready in a minute, and went.

Some one, Meath thought it was Mardon, was heard outside asking after the "powder"—Meath hoped the play didn't turn on any explosives, as he would rather not attend.

Then at last Runnat opened the door and told him that he had been sent to inform him he could come.

The whole of Polton's room had been turned completely upside down. Three parts of it had been turned into stage, and the rest had been filled up with chairs and tables for the accommodation of the audience, where they were at liberty to shake down as they could. Meath was glad to see they had had the grace to provide a private box for him in front in the shape of an arm-chair, as what the rest of the audience were to do with their legs he couldn't exactly see.

The audience came in one by one, and climbed over the chairs to get to fancied places. There was a good deal of fighting going on behind, and Meath felt himself called upon to check it. Pevensey, who had established himself in the second best place, turned round and threatened them with his umbrella. He had abandoned his stump and got this umbrella instead "to thump with," he said, "it looked more like the real thing." He wanted to know if any one had any oranges to suck, and directed the lower boys, sitting up in the gallery, that was, the table behind, to blow cat-calls to be quite right. Meath remonstrated with him for promoting disturbances, and he immediately turned round and let them know that if he heard the slightest sound of a row up behind there, he would come and demolish them with his umbrella. His own minor then chose to be unruly, and said he didn't care. Meath saw a row was impending; what was he to do? He must show Pevensey he was not going to be checked in his duty by any fear of him, and act accordingly.

Luckily, this time there was no need for any demonstrations of authority, as at this moment some of the actors came in and crawled over the audience's head on to the stage. The stage was of the most primitive description. The Poltons' beds had been dragged sideways so as to form two sort of wings, behind which were the green-rooms,

and a curtain was strung across between them. In front of the curtain was a row of candles with a tablecloth hung over something raised about a foot from the floor between the said candles and the audience, to serve as a reflector.

More actors now came in and stowed themselves away in the extremely limited green-room. The curtains began to be considerably agitated, and voices of dissension were heard behind, as if the stage was getting crowded. There were eight actors, and, on a rough calculation, Meath supposed the space behind the curtain was about eight feet square in area. There was a little muttering behind the curtain, and then Mardon stepped out and handed Meath the programme, as the chief guest. Now they would see what they were going to see.

HOuSE ThÉATRICALS.

(under the patronage of Mr. Meath, A.B.C. X.Y.Z. &c. &c.)

That must have been some wag that put that in, Meath remarked.—He felt proud of the honour.—What further? ON SATURDAY WILL BE PRODUCED BY THIS SOCIETY—it didn't say what Society—A DIGEST OF THE TRAGEDY OF LORD BYRON OF SARDANAPALUS—Was it Lord Byron wrote Sardanapalus or Sardanapalus wrote Lord Byron? thought Meath, because the playbill seemed rather doubtful about the matter. Well then, to proceed:

DRAMATI SPERSONÆ.

The printing was a little curious—

SARDANAPALUS	MR. LINNAT.
ARBACES	MR. BrENT.
BELESES	MR. RUNNET.

Here was Meath's talented fag coming out in a new line;

SALAMENES	MR. MARDON.
ALTADA	MR. HEWLE.
ZARINA	MR. ALfER.
MYRRHA	MR. RUMSHALL.

The latent genius, Meath thought, of his tutor's Lower division, was developing itself. He never had known that these three last fellows had souls above anything more than their ordinary life. Well, we never ought to judge by appearances, to be sure. But to continue:

COURTIERS, WOMEN, PRIESTS, MEDES, &c.

Subtract seven principal actors from a company of eight and it left materials for the courtiers, women, priests, &c., Meath supposed. Still it was only a digest, so probably a good deal of the superfluous matter had been absorbed in the process.

SCENE—A HALLIN THE ROYAL PALACE OF NINEVEH.

All this time, the curtain had been agitated by repeated convulsions of the actors behind, who appeared to be dressing under slight difficulties. The string suddenly broke and the curtain fell, but it evidently wasn't intended, as some one seized hold of it and the whole company joined their efforts to get it right again. Meath caught sight of Alfer struggling into a dressing-gown while it was down. Alfer, he saw, was to be Zarina. He wondered who he or she could be. Also he was rather curious to know what Sardanapalus could want with a fishing-rod and powder.

The audience was getting impatient. Pevensey called to the actors to know when they were going to commence, and began to stump on the floor with his umbrella. Then he proposed some music, and ordered a lower boy in the gallery to go and get him a comb. The lower boy was just starting when the curtain was suddenly drawn aside, disclosing the window in very much its usual state at the back, and a Windsor chair standing in the middle of the stage. The actors had all managed to put themselves away in the spaces behind the beds. Ends of dresses were to be seen peeping forth, and the sheath of a formidable-looking weapon.

Enter Mardon. He looked round. Then he struck an

attitude and threw out his right arm. It was evident that he had carefully studied his part, gestures and all. Then he looked at the audience—

Lower Boy (*up behind, in a whisper*).—"I say, who's that?"

Pevensey.—"Shut up there in the pit, don't interrupt." (*Looking at play-bill.*) "That's Salamenes."

Lower Boy (*humbly*).—"Thank you. (*Relapses into silent attention.*)

Salamenes-Merlin had, meanwhile, been standing in his attitude, waiting for perfect silence, and had given the audience plenty of time to take his appearance in. He had got on a green and black table-cloth, a pair of blue trousers, a night-shirt, and round his head he had tied a towel. On his feet were a pair of carpet slippers, and his general appearance was that of a man who had got up suddenly on an alarm of fire and put on whatever he could first lay hands on. However, he was going to begin. Attention!

Salamenes.—"When I gaze around and see"—Here he gazed around, and broke out with—"I say, aren't there any more coming to look on than that?"

Polton minor (*up in the gallery*).—"I couldn't find any one else, please, Mardon. I went all round the house, and I think they're all here."

A voice from the green-room.—"Perhaps the maids would like to come. We must have some more to see. Cut and ask them, Polton."

Polton departed on his mission, and during the interval the curtain was redrawn to await the arrival of the maids. Salamenes retired. After a little Polton returned, and climbed up to his place, where Meath heard him telling his companions that he had been only able to "muster one maid." Presently she arrived, and took up her position near the door, with the remark, "Lor, what a mess you have made the room in to be sure, Mr. Polton; I hope you don't expect *me* to clear it away."

Then the curtain was again drawn aside. This time it struck on a knot in the string, and in the struggle the whole thing came down with a run. However, the great object being to get it out of the way, it didn't so much matter this time. Re-enter Salamenes. He didn't waste any time now, but this time he threw out his left arm, and began again:

"As I look around me and see"—

Pevensey.—"That wasn't the way you began before."

Salamenes (*a little irritated*).—"Well, you ass, you know it's only a digest, so"—

Linnat (*poking his head out from behind the bed*).—"Yes, of course it's only a digest, so you can't expect us to keep to the exact words, only the essence of the thing, you know."

Pevensey.—"All right, go ahead." And he threw himself back into his chair with an air of resignation.

Salamenes (*trying again*).—"Let's see—oh! Now that I see these marble pillars of these stately halls (*pointing to the beds*) and these splendid arches (*pointing to the window, which by the way was square*) as well as this gorgeous throne (*evidently referring to the Windsor chair*), up the steps of which are twelve beautifully carved Assyrian lions with human faces and wings (*waving his hands about as if to work the audience up to imagine all these beauties*)—"

(This speech was evidently to supply the deficiencies in the scenery.)

"Then I think how mournful it is that our king Sardanappalus should be such a bad king."

He was preparing to go. Meath always had an idea that Byron was a poet, but he had been trying to detect the rhyme or, in default of that, even blank verse in the whole of this speech, but had failed to do so. Salamenes, however, wasn't allowed to go yet.

Some one (*behind the bed*—I mean—*the marble pillars—in*

a loud whisper).—"I say, you musn't come out yet, and you've left out the bit about the music."

Salamanes (*recollecting his error, and turning round suddenly to face the audience*).—"Oh, yes! Listen to that music (*a few inharmonious bars played by some one behind the scenes on a comb*); isn't it disgraceful?" (*looking round in a melo-dramatic manner*).

Pevensey (*tired of keeping silence*).—"Well, since you ask me, I think it is, and—"

Meath (*with respect for the actor's feelings*).—Don't interrupt, Pevensey; you know it isn't the usual thing at the big theatres."

Pevensey.—"No, because they never ask the audience things in such a point-blank manner there."

While the two had been talking there had been some struggling behind the beds, and two more personages had extricated themselves, and entered. Poor Salamenes had to back close up against one of the sides of the stage to make room for the new comers. They were, Linnat in a silk dressing-gown, and what looked to Meath very like part of the stuffing of an ottoman, floating below his chin, intended apparently to represent a beard; and Rumshall with a towel tied round the lower part of his face, and a petticoat, improvised out of a table-cloth, with an over-skirt made of a towel. His boddice consisted of a tightly-buttoned Eton jacket.

Linnat.—"Oh, Myrrha!"

Rumshall.—"Oh, Sardanapalus!" Here Salamenes started in horror at something.

Meath admired the way in which the dearth of play-bills was supplied by explaining who each person was on his entry.

Linnat—I mean—*Sardanapalus.*—"As I was saying as we came along, Together, Myrrha, through the palace grounds, Oh, Myrrha, how I love you very much."

Great applause from the audience at this outburst of blank verse. The actors became encouraged to further exertions.

Myrrha.—"My lord and master, great Assyria's king, How many times when walking through the gar—Dens with thee now, to-day, oh, Sardana—" Here Salamenes again started,—"Palus, I've told thee that I love thee, too."

Meath thought it was rather curious that they should thus insist on the fact of their having been just walking together, because as it happened, one had come in at one side of the stage, and the other at the other. He supposed there must have been some little hitch in the arrangements before the curtain rose or rather fell. This blank verse was more like real tragedy. They were getting into the swing of it now.

Salamenes (advancing as far as possible, about half a foot).—"Sardanappallus, I have something to communicate unto thee." (*Throwing both his arms out at right angles to his body, and standing in that attitude for a few seconds like a rustic trying to keep back a herd of cows*).

Sardanapalus (*treating him as if he considered him an idiot*, which to tell the truth, said Meath, wasn't much to be wondered at, considering his appearance).—"Pooh, we will not listen, for we have not time, Come hither, Myrrha, and now share my throne; (*seating themselves each on a corner of the Windsor chair.*)—Oh Myrrha, very beautiful art thou"—

Pevensey.—"Oh my, here's pretty goings on. I'll tell your mother, I will." (*Giggles heard from behind in the gallery*).

Salamenes (*as Mardon*).—"Hold your row, Pevensey. When we're trying to entertain you, you might as well keep quiet, I think."

Pevensey.—"All right, I didn't mean to—it came out unintentional.—(*Hearing more giggling*) "Look here, if you fellows up behind there can't shut up, I'll come and give you a taste of my umbrella."

Silence was restored; the play went on.

Myrrha.—"Oh, good my lord!" (*simpering in the most approved manner*).

Sardanapalus.—"Deny 't not, oh my Myrrha, Fairest thou

art of all who dwell in these, Fair palaces of great Babylon's town."

The playbill said the scene was laid in Nineveh, but then, as Meath said, every one knows digestion is a curious process.

Sardanapalus.—"Go, Myrrha, ask, oh, ask your looking-glass."

Here Pevensey thought it necessary to applaud violently with his umbrella and both feet, and thereby gave the cue to pit and gallery to do the same. The actors stopped and looked rather surprised. When the tumult had subsided;—

Pevensey.—"Bravo! good pun! Bravo! encore!"

Sardanapalus.—"What d'you mean? What pun?"

Pevensey.—"Why, *Myrrha* and *looking-glass*, of course. You meant it for a pun, didn't you?"

Sardanapalus (*indignantly*).—"Pun? No. Why, this is a tragedy, you fool!"

Pevensey.—"Oh, I'm very sorry, I'm sure, I thought it was a pun. Well, go on; I'll take care to applaud in the right place next time."

Salamenes (*continuing the play*).—"But now, king Sardanappallus (*throwing out his arm like a railway signal*), I tell thee that thou mustest hear me now" (*dropping that arm and throwing out the other*).

Myrrha.—"Methinks, my lord, that I had betterd' part."

Sardanapalus.—"Perhaps thou'd better, Myrrha, on the whole. Thy face is like the sweetest rose on earth, Tiptittled, like the—"—Meath didn't think this was Byron—"like the —" (forgetting the end of the quotation. Then suddenly becoming seized with inspiration)—"like the dewy nightingale."

Burst of applause from the audience. It was lucky, Meath observed, that Myrrha had the towel over his face, as his every-day beauty is not of the surpassing type that this speech would lead one to suppose.

Salamenes had meantime been flapping about his arms as

if to get himself warm, and was evidently preparing to speak. Sardanapalus bowed Myrrha out in the most-correct drawing-room style, and then turned to Salamenes.

Salamenes.—"Sardanappallus, know that there is a conspiracy raised against thee!" (*very tragically.*)

Sardanapalus.—"Oh, say not so!"

(A pause.)

Salamenes (*finding he is expected to speak.*)—"But I do say so."

Sardanapalus.—"Am I great Sardanapalus, and is any one daring to conspire against *me?*"

Salamenes.—"They do, Sardanappallus."

Sardanapalus.—"Come with me, then, and tell me all about it." (*Exeunt arm in arm.*)

Some one reached an arm out from behind the bed, picking up the fallen curtain, and hung it up again with some difficulty. This was evidently the end of the first act. Great applause from everybody.

Pevensey turned round to ask the maid what she thought of it. She clearly had no soul for the drama, and laughed, and said she thought "Mr. Rumshall did look so funny with his head tied up that way in a towel." Linnat was heard protesting from behind the curtain at anything in the tragedy being called funny. Pevensey began to try to explain the difference between tragedy and comedy to the boy's maid. "You see, you know, it's this—a tragedy is—well, a tragedy and a comedy is—you know—a comedy;" but she found it was getting late, and she had to go.

There had been meanwhile an animated discussion going on behind the curtain between Mardon and Sinnat about the right pronunciation of Sardanapalus. Mardon stuck to it that it ought to be Appallus, while Sinnat said it ought to be Apālus. They appealed to Meath through the curtain, but he really couldn't tell them; he had never had occasion to use the word before. Pevensey suggested tossing up, and offered to do it for them; heads Appallus, tails Apālus.

Meath recommended leaving out the word altogether. As now every one knew S, A, R, D, A, N, A, P, A, L, U, S by sight, there could be no absolute need for naming him. This being settled, the play was ready to proceed.

Meath (*looking at his watch*).—"Come, it's nearly supper time. You'd better look sharp if you want to get done."

Mardon.—"All right—we're nearly ready."

Pevensey (*seeing the curtain shaken*).—"Now, then, just a going to begin. 'Tention, ladies and gentlemen. Walk up, see the live lions—Oh, I beg pardon; won't do it any more."

The curtain slid back without any hitch this time. Scene the same, with the exception of the Windsor chair. Enter mysteriously Brent and Runnet. They prowled round each other once or twice, and then spoke in deep bass voices:—

Brent.—"Beleses!"

Runnet.—"Arbaces?"

Beleses.—(now we know who he is.) "We must kill the tyrant."

Arbaces.—"But how?"

Beleses (*producing an Indian dagger from underneath his garment, which thereby disarranged it in the movement, and causing it to slip off his shoulder, disclosing Beleses in his shirt sleeves*).—"With this my trusty dagger!" (*Brandishing it in dangerous proximity to Arbaces' eye.*)

Pevensey (*jumping up.*)—"Hang it; who lent you that dagger, I'd like to know?"

Arbaces (*apologetically.*)—"Oh, we didn't think you'd mind, we couldn't find you when we sent to borrow it. We'll take care of it."

Pevensey (*pacified.*)—"You'd better. I esteem that knife very much. Well, go on now."

Beleses (*rather flurried at this interruption*).—"All right. We'll kill him to-morrow." (*Exeunt.*)

The curtain closed on the second act. Pevensey's comment on it; "Short and sweet."

There was no delay about getting on to Act three. The curtain came down again and disclosed Sardan—whatever his name was, Salamenes, Myrrha, Zarina-Alfer, Altada-Hewle, and the odd man who was required to unite in himself the Courtiers, Women, Priests, and all other supernumeraries, standing in a row like a charity school going to begin a chorus.

Perhaps, thought Meath, they *are* going to begin a chorus.

Sardan-&c. (*evidently in a hurry to get done in time for supper, without any gesticulations or anything*).—"Bring forth the banquet."

Zarina.—"My lord!"

Sard.—"Speak not to me. Myrrha, come hither, my love."

Pevensey.—"I say, who's Zarina supposed to be?"

Salamenes.—"Don't interrupt; we're in a hurry. Zarina's the queen."

Pevensey.—"Oh! I'm not much wiser now. Who's Hewle supposed to be? Is he a he or a she? You're all dressed so much alike."

Sard.—"Oh, do be quiet; we shall never be finished. He's Altada, a courtier. If you'd only wait, you'd see all that." (To *Altada*) "Altada, bring up the banquet."

Pevensey (*half to himself*).—"Oh, I see, head cook and bottle washer, and all that. Proceed."

Myrrha.—"My lord."

Sardan.—"Is the banquet ready? Let's get to it." (A violent thumping heard at the side of one of the beds. Movements as of astonishment executed in a variety of forms by the actors.)

Salamenes (peeping round the corner of the other bed.) "King, the conspirators are without, we must fly."

Sard. (*with dignity*).—"I'll never fly. Bring forth the costly furniture and I will perish with all my belongings."

Here the actors broke the rank in which they had hitherto been standing, and three Windsor chairs that had been packed away in some miraculous manner in the green-room,

were produced, and put in a pile in the middle of the stage. His majesty placed himself at the top, Salamenes put a saucer with some yellow stuff—evidently the powder that had excited Meath's curiosity so—underneath the lowest chair; and, producing a box of matches, tried to strike one.

At this moment shouts were heard in the distance from behind one of the beds, two thumps—and Arbaces and Beleses rushed in. Now, surely the Court ought to be able to resist the two conspirators. But, no! there was a traitor in the camp. The courtiers, women, priests, Medes, &c., all went over to the conspirators' side, and what chance could the king and his party have against them then? Salamenes had been fumbling with the matches all this time, and had used four already without having succeeded in setting light to the yellow compound in the saucer. Meanwhile a general scuffle was going on among the other actors, irrespective of who was on whose side, and Altada sat down on one of the foot-lights and the stick that supported the reflector table-cloth. It snapped, and, "Oh, my fishing-rod!" was heard from the gallery, from one of the lower boys. At last Salamenes set light to the contents of the saucer, and an awful sulphureous smell at once arose. Every one held their noses and rushed to the door except the actors, who remained behind for the final tableau—

Arbaces (*brandishing his dagger, by way of finish to the tragedy*).—"Marry come up, 'tis well."

Meath thought this was hardly Byronic, but supposed they ought to know best. Arbaces then disposed himself to die, and the other actors died too, in different positions about the stage. The smell was getting awful. Meath felt he must really get out of this. The last view he got of the king was tottering in a most uncomfortable position on the top of the pile of costly furniture, which finally gave way as he left the room. Pevensey, who had occasion to be well up in the subject of the price of chairs, remarked, as a com-

ment on the costly furniture, "Seven-and-six in the bill for a new Windsor chair."

Out in the passage, and the fresh air at last. Meath's opinion of the tragedy was that the adapter must have been blessed with a remarkably good digestion. He must get hold of a Byron and read the original. He always liked reading a play after he had seen it acted. It gave him a better idea of the thing. And there was the supper bell, so the evening was virtually over, and he congratulated himself that he had behaved with great policy. He had kept the house from an absolute disturbance, and hadn't brought any ill will on himself by stopping harmless amusement.

The actors had by this time thrown off their equipments, and left the poor Poltons to survey the chaos. Meath's string was returned to him in a hopeless state of entanglement. Theatricals were evidently not exactly the thing to encourage tidiness, at any rate. He must consider how he ought to act in the case of an oppressed lower boy. The only way he saw was to oppress other lower boys, and make them help clear Polton's room. He holloed, and they came, and so the work of clearing went on in full force, and was done by prayer time.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CARES OF AUTHORITY.

HALF-past four in the morning, of all unearthly hours of the day or night, and, for the life of him, Meath couldn't get to sleep. Was it, he thought, that he was oppressed with the weight of his office,—"Uneasy lies the head," &c.,—and so he could not slumber like the innocent lower boy who had no dignity to support?

Thank goodness! he would lay down his authority at eleven o'clock school that day, when the Captain came back

from long leave. A week of nights, such as the last had been, would finish him, he was sure.

On Saturday night, Pevensey and he being the only members of the Debating Society left, they had agreed to let each other off without fining for non-attendance, although, according to the rules, they should have been President and Secretary, and the rest of the evening after the theatricals passed off very pacifically. So did Sunday, and Meath experienced no difficulties in the exercise of the captaincy with the exception of having to carve some beef at dinner, a thing he had never done before, and his performances in which line called forth sundry remarks about hatchets, and offers to run out to fetch hand-saws from his subjects. Otherwise the day passed off very well, but in the evening his troubles had begun.

They had all been owing to that everlasting Pevensey. In his anxiety to please Meath, or, at any rate, he said that was his reason, he thought it necessary to go round the house two or three times in the course of the evening, and poke his head into everybody's room to see that they were doing their Sunday Questions. After about the sixteenth repetition of this, the fellows began naturally to get rather tired of it, and a row ensued between him and Mardon, which, of course, Meath had to go and stop, he, as the peace-maker, getting rather the worse of it in the course of the dispute. That was iniquity number one.

Then, after prayers, when the house was in perfect order, and every one was thinking of getting to bed, he insisted on leading Meath arm-in-arm with him round the house, doing what he called "on the patrol," which consisted of thumping violently at everybody's door, and demanding entrance in the Queen's name to see that everybody was in bed, it being their business, he said, as first and second captain. "Second captain be hanged," said Meath. When he really became captain he should govern despotically, and not constitution-

ally, or, at any rate, Pevensey shouldn't form part of the constitution.

Pevensey took him on the patrol three times, at a quarter to ten, ten, and twenty minutes past. The third time they met their tutor, and Pevensey fled, and left Meath to bear the brunt of being out of his room so late. However, his tutor didn't say much—perhaps he thought he had a right to be about as captain; but still he might have, so Meath thought it was very mean of Pevensey. His tutor told him it was nearly time for all good little boys to be in bed, and he replied, "Yes, sir," in a way calculated to show that he agreed with the statement, but didn't consider himself as included under the heading of "little."

His tutor went to Pevensey, and stayed talking to him for a long time. Meath thought he must have been giving him a few words of admonition, and he was glad, as he felt Pevensey deserved it.

About half-past ten, when he was half ready to jump into bed, Pevensey came into his room again. It had suddenly dawned upon him that he had got his Sunday Questions to do by early school next morning, and without being particularly agitated by this remarkable discovery, he started round the house to borrow materials. Meath sent him away with a flea in his ear, but he only went into the Poltons' room, and in another half minute called out to Meath to bring a light. It appeared that on his entrance he had heard some sort of scuffle, and he wanted to see what it was. On Meath's bringing a light it turned out that he had at last succeeded in discovering a case where a little judicious authority might be exercised. The two Poltons were rather of the Cain and Abel type, and whether it was that the minor had murderous intentions on the minor, or *vice versâ*, and the minor had only taken measures in self-defence, Meath couldn't gather from both trying to talk at once; but, however it was, the minor had thought proper to arm

himself, and the major endeavouring to disarm him after their candles were taken, this had caused the scuffle that Pevensey had interrupted. When Meath brought a light to investigate the matter, Polton minor, was discovered sitting up in bed, surrounded with boots, and holding a poker in his hand, while the major was half in bed and half out, and appealing to them to save him from his minor. The latter denied that it was his fault, but Meath cut short the argument by ordering him to lay down his arms, and go to sleep. On this, he produced from under the bed-clothes his shovel, two stumps, and a pair of candlesticks, all of which his brother declared had been intended to be shied at him. Meath and Pevensey didn't listen to any of their disputes, but told them to make no more row or they'd repent it, and left.

Meath then had gone to bed, but not to sleep. He couldn't get to sleep because he was thinking what Pevensey would be up to next. He had packed him off at the same time, and commanded him to go to bed, but he hadn't. However, his tutor came up shortly afterwards, and saw him to bed. When Meath heard him leave Pevensey's room, and gathered from what he said, that P. was in bed, he turned over, and tried to compose himself to sleep with a sigh of relief, as he felt that his cares were over for the day. But sleep wouldn't come. He thought about the beagles, he thought about the Debating Society, about anything and everything, and then he counted seven hundred and twenty-eight, and he was as wide awake as ever. He began to feel furious. Then he tried not to think, and the consequence was that he thought at twice the rate he had before. He heard eleven, a quarter past, and half-past strike, and he had a good growl at himself for being such an ass as not to be able to get to sleep.

About a quarter to twelve he heard his tutor about. He felt hurt at his prowling about in this way; it looked as if

he thought he couldn't keep order. He half thought of going out to give him a bit of his mind, but he heard him go straight to Pevensey's door, so he didn't care so much; he was glad of any one who could control Pevensey. From what Meath gathered from the conversation that ensued Pevensey had got up again to do his work after he had been seen to bed, as he heard him trying to argue to his tutor that there was no law against getting up as early as one pleased, provided one went to bed at the proper time. His tutor didn't see the force of the argument, so deprived Pevensey of his matches, blew out his candle, and went down again.

Then peace reigned at last in the house, broken only by the creaking of Meath's arm-chair, which had a way of recovering at night all that it had been pressed down during the day. He gradually began to feel drowsier and drowsier and more vague, and he at last forgot his troubles in some of the most extraordinary dreams imaginable.

He was recalled to consciousness about three-quarters of an hour before the time at which he was first described, by the sudden apparition of Pevensey in his dressing-gown and armed with a poker. He sat up quickly, thinking it might be fire, or something of that sort. Pevensey would give no explanation, only said "Be quick!" Meath jumped out of bed, put on his great-coat, as the first garment that came to hand, and catching up his poker, in case of burglars, followed Pevensey to his room. The curtain was drawn back, and by the light of the moon could be seen Pevensey minor, in a very *déshabille* and shivering state, keeping guard with a shovel over the fender, the sides and front of which were built up with books. Then Pevensey stopped and delivered a sort of lecture to explain his reasons for dragging Meath out of bed at these unearthly hours of the morning. It appeared that he, too, had been afflicted by an indisposition to sleep, and, while lying awake, had had his peace of mind greatly disturbed by a monster

in the shape of a mouse careering about his room. He said that it was at least the size of a full-grown rabbit, but the minor described it as quite a wee thing. Meath was rather inclined to accept the minor's version, as he knew his tutor's mice were all of the same breed, having escaped from a pet cage belonging to a lower boy, about two halves before. But however that may have been, Pevensey had at last got so exasperated by its evolutions about the room, that he got out of bed, and, after pursuing it for some time, finally ran it to earth under the fender. Then he had banked it up, in the way aforesaid, and calling up his minor to keep guard, had come in to summon Meath to assist in its sacrifice. When he had told all this, Meath said he wished he would kill his mice without disturbing him, and he replied that he thought he wanted to have a hand in all the disturbances in the house now he was captain, and that, in his opinion, this was a very serious disturbance. Then Meath said, "Well, at any rate, let's have done with the thing, and get back to bed," and accordingly they made their preparations. Meath was to stand ready with the poker to stop any chance of the ferocious animal escaping, Pevensey minor was to lift up the fender cautiously, and his major was to deal the fatal blow. All this was to be done on a given signal. They took their stations. Then they raised their weapons. Then Pevensey said slowly and distinctly: One—two—THREE!!!! The fender was lifted, down crashed the three iron implements simultaneously, there was a howl as of something in pain, but it came from the minor, who had been struck by his major on the toe.—

There was no mouse there!

"I didn't say anything at the time," said Meath; "my heart was too full. I went back to bed and tried in vain to get to sleep again. But if any one irritates me in the course of to-day, they'd better take care!"

CHAPTER XXII.

WHY MEATH DID NOT JOIN THE VOLUNTEERS.

WHY didn't Meath join the Volunteers? That's what he complained every one came bothering at him about. There had been a great Volunteer movement at his tutor's of late, and the Captain had been recruiting wholesale. Meath fancied that his motives were not wholly disinterested and solely with a view to the welfare of the Corps, because he had heard that if he could get a certain number of recruits to join, he was going to be made something grand or other—Lieutenant-general perhaps, or maybe Field Marshal. At any rate he was very keen about it.

Why didn't Meath join? It was a very healthy recreation, and after the drills were once got over there was a great deal of amusement to be got out of the Volunteers. That was what had been dinned into his ears, without intermission, for the last fortnight, and he was beginning to get rather tired of it. Why didn't he join the Volunteers? Well, if it was particularly necessary, he said, that he should state his reasons for not doing so, it was because the Volunteers wouldn't have him. That was all.

As already said, a marked spirit had been awakened amongst his tutor's fellows, and at last he had caught the infection. He said to himself that the field-days seemed to be a very good occupation for long, and otherwise often dull whole holidays; again, that drilling might do him good and make him grow, which was a very desirable object; thirdly, that it would train him to the use of firearms, so that in future he would not incur the risk of slaying his cousin when he went out shooting with him in the holidays; and lastly, he had lately become very patriotic from reading the papers, and when somebody started a notion that if the Regulars were ordered off to the seat of war the Eton

Volunteers would be posted as a garrison at Portsmouth, he felt something stir within him, and he said, "Yes, I will enlist and go forth and assist in the defence of my native land!"

This was at tea. Stortford looked at him across the table and said, "Lor!" so Meath threw half a loaf at his head and went to pay Vernant a visit, as being the best authority he could think of on the subject of the Volunteers, and consult him as to what he ought to do.

Vernant was one of those fellows who give up their whole time to the Volunteers. They had just made him a Lance-coporal, whatever that may be, Meath said, and he devoted himself entirely to drilling and shooting; when he wasn't doing one he was at the other, and he spent the intervals in cleaning his rifle, so that if it was hard work that gains promotion, Meath thought that Vernant would be General-issimo, or perhaps they would even invent something special, bigger than that for him—in no time.

Meath opened Vernant's door rather suddenly and nearly tumbled over him as he lay prostrate on the floor looking along his rifle at a little paper target that he had stuck up against the wall opposite. He said, "Good gracious, Vernant, what's up now?" Vernant had become rather sensitive of late, because fellows had taken to humbug him about his Volunteer mania. So he replied, "If you've come to play the ass, you'd better be off."

Meath said in accents full of conciliation; "I have not come to play the ass, Vernant; I have come to make some inquiries respecting my enlisting into the Volunteers; I am in no hurry; I can sit down and wait till you have done; pray do not mind me."

Vernant seemed pleased with his intentions, so Meath sat down and looked at him while he went on, thinking that now he was going to join the Corps he might profit by watching his military evolutions.

Vernant said by way of explanation that he was just going through a little aiming drill. Meath could think of nothing better to say than "Oh," and sat for some time silently regarding him and trying to learn something.

After he had clicked the lock of his rifle about five and twenty times in the position that Meath had found him in at first, he said, "I think that will do for three hundred yards; now we'll try a little at five hundred." Then he put up a smaller target and took up his position opposite it in a sitting posture against the other wall, with one leg crossed over the other and his rifle twisted in and out between the two. He explained to Meath that shooting was easier in this position. Meath said he was quite ready to believe anything he told him, and that he would try to remember.

Then they had examples of shooting at seven hundred, nine hundred, and a thousand yards; also specimens of how one ought to shoot in a high wind, in a low wind, in rain, hail, or snow, or any other imaginable contingency. There seemed to be a great deal of gymnastic exercise attendant on shooting. Meath had used to think that it only consisted in putting a gun to one's shoulder, taking careful aim, and pulling the trigger; but, after watching Vernant for half an hour, he perceived that to do the thing properly it wanted much more than that—it required a profound knowledge of acrobatism, and of how to lie with one's leg round the back of one's head, or with both legs tied in a knot round one's neck, or with the rifle balanced on the sole of the boot, or in some other equally difficult position, and, what was more, all this must be done with an ease and grace that would require months of practice.

It was after watching the display of ornamental aiming for some time that he at last ventured to ask Vernant if he thought it would be necessary for him to learn to stand on his head preparatory to joining the Volunteers, as, if so, he would go and begin at once. Vernant seemed irritated at

something, and said, "Look here, young Meath, you think you're coming here to chaff me and do as you like, but I can just tell you I'm not going to stand any of your humbug, so if you can't keep civil you'd better make tracks."

Meath said, as gravely as he could, to show him how unfounded his suspicions were, "Vernant, I did not come here for the purpose of chaffing you, I assure you; I came to ask you about the Volunteers, and what I ought to do to enlist. I beg your pardon if I have unintentionally offended you, and so please do not be angry with me, and tell me what I desire to know."

Vernant rather calmed down at this conciliatory address, and proceeded to enlighten him on the various forms and conditions attendant on enlistment. He was to be five foot three in stature; of good character; not given to drinking, smoking, or other bad habits—no, let's see, I'm not certain about all that—no, the only conditions were that he was to be five foot three and in fifth form. The rest were all taken for granted, as a matter of course. Meath was all right as regarded the fifth form part of the business; the only question was, was he the required standard of height?

Now, Meath's height has always had a most aggravating tendency to decrease, he says. Whenever he accompanies any one into any of the tailors' shops, he rushes to the machine for taking people's heights, takes off his hat, and measures himself; and the result always seems to be that he is a little smaller than when he last tried the experiment. However, the last time that he had done so, just now, he had made himself five foot two and a half, and, although that had been a decrease of exactly one inch since the beginning of the half, yet he thought that, with the aid of boots of an extra thickness, two pair of socks or so, and the traditional quarter of an inch that every one gains every night in bed, he ought to be able to satisfy the requirements of the Corps.

He made a few further inquiries of Vernant as to whether

anything else would be required of him; if he would have to provide his own weapons, what subscriptions there were, and if he would have to take any oaths or anything of that sort—because he didn't, as a rule, approve of oaths—and then he thanked him and returned to his room to do his work.

Next morning after ten he put on two pairs of very thick boots, and over them he pulled his beagling-stockings, then he borrowed an immense pair of shooting-boots from Pevensey, and put them on. Then he brushed his hair in such a manner that it added about an inch to his stature, and putting on his hat carefully so as not to spoil the effect, he sallied forth to the Armoury, feeling very much as if he was afflicted with the gout, to tender his services to his country.

However, he found a large number of recruits drilling in their top-hats and sword-belts, and amongst them a lot of his tutor's fellows, Pevensey among the rest, in great difficulties about the point of his bayonet with his front rank man; and being of a shy disposition, his heart failed him at the last moment, and he thought he would put it off till there were less fellows about.

He didn't go again after twelve because every one was about then, and he felt that his appearance when equipped for enlisting, partook somewhat of the comic, and might excite remark, so he waited till after four, and then he again made his preparations, and again set off to the Armoury.

He found the door locked, but there was some one moving inside, he was sure, so he knocked. No answer; he knocked again. Still no answer; but he thought he might not get another such an opportunity of enlisting in secret, as he was rather desirous of doing, so he determined to persevere, and he kicked. It didn't seem to have any effect, and yet he was sure there was somebody inside, and was just going to apply his eye to the keyhole to see, when the door opened suddenly, and a man with a military cast of countenance and a red beard put his head out. He said, "Well?"

Meath gasped, "Oh, er, please, I've come to—" The man interrupted with, "Sergeant 'll be here-in-about-quarter-of-an-hour," and shut the door in his face.

Meath thought he couldn't have understood him properly. Surely a man of such warlike demeanour must be the person suited to his business; so he knocked again. Then he knocked louder; then he rattled the lock. This had the desired effect; the man popped his head out, and, seeing it was only Meath again, he exclaimed in a voice of mingled scorn and anger, "Well, didn't I tell you that—" Meath saw that if he wasn't sharp he would never get out what he wanted to say, so he burst in here with, "But you didn't wait to hear what I'd got to say; I came here because I wanted to put down my name for the Volunteers." The man said, "Well, didn't-I-tell-you-the-Sergeant-'ll-be-here-soon?" "But," said Meath, "surely *you'll* do as well?" He said this in a flattering tone, so as to soothe him. It didn't seem to have the desired effect. The man only said sharply, "No-I-won't," and banged the door to again.

Meath saw there was no help for it but to abide the Sergeant's arrival, but he felt that every precious moment was taking away from his borrowed stature, and that he was slowly but surely shrinking. He balanced himself on the balustrade at the bottom of a neighbouring staircase, to take off all the pressure possible from his feet, and waited. At last the Sergeant arrived. Meath rushed at him and narrated his wants, and was told to follow him into the Armoury.

He did so, and after having scanned him from top to toe, and regarded his pedal arrangements with what Meath thought rather a supercilious air, the Sergeant led him to the fatal spot where the feet and inches were marked on the wall. He placed his back firmly against the wall, drew a long breath and himself up to the highest point that he could attain, and awaited the verdict. First, the Sergeant pressed down his artistically arranged hair; that reduced him by one

inch at that end at once; he felt the matter was getting desperate; and when the Sergeant announced that half an inch at least must be taken off at the other extremity to allow for his boots; also that he must please not try and increase his height by standing on his toes, as it would be impossible for him to remain in that position when in marching order; and lastly, when he finally pronounced that he was afraid he wouldn't do just yet as he was a whole inch too small, it was too much for Meath; he felt that his Nemesis had followed him even to the Armoury, and that his tendency to a downward growth had again come over him; he rushed from the place, hardly waiting to hear what he considered a most insulting proposal on the Sergeant's part, namely, that there was a fine opening for him in the band, and feeling that he would like to shoot the red-bearded man, who, by-the-bye, he discovered was but a subordinate creature, engaged in the purification of the Armoury, with a scrubbing brush and pail, but who had, nevertheless, been witness of his discomfiture—and he reached his tutor's a sadder if not a wiser—well—Eton fellow.

If Stortford ever asks him now why he hasn't joined after all, Meath throws something at him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SANITARY MATTERS.

MORE towards the end of the half, measles became the latest thing in excitements at Meath's tutor's. This was thanks to Pevensey minor, who, not content with not having put in an appearance till most of the half was over, must needs add to his enormities by just remaining on the scene long enough for him to put his elongated dimensions into tails, and then breaking out into infectious disorders, which he imparted to a considerable number of his associates, thereby causing an

extremely inconvenient dearth of lower boys in the house. Meath fagged them all not to catch measles, but he could do no more.

For about a week after P. was taken worse, there was an average of one stricken with the plague *per diem*. The house began to get into an habitual state of excitement as to who was going to be down next, some of the fellows being in an abject state of terror lest it should be themselves, but most of them appearing to be rather anxious to catch it than otherwise. Meath's dame compelled him to stay out for four days or so, because she was sure that he was going to get the measles. She said there was a wild look in his eye that spoke for itself. Meath was put on a strict diet, consisting chiefly of toast and water, and saw the doctor, who prescribed for him a green mixture of some sort; but the label came off the bottle, and he didn't know whether he was to take it externally or internally, so he did the two in turns. He said it reminded him of flat ginger-beer and soap with a little solution of Chalvey mud put in to give it a flavour. He finished half a bottle between himself and his window box, and he felt it do him a great deal of good. He stipulated to his dame that if the measles didn't make their appearance in a given time, she was not to confine him to the house any longer. He knew he was not going to have them, he said. Why, his people always declared he had had them five times, and he knew for certain he had had them two. But his dame was naturally a little fidgety at this time. It was so dull staying out by himself. There was nothing to do, especially if one was excused work, as his dame thought he had better be, for fear of sending infection into school. He was all by himself the first day, and he found nothing better to do than wander about the house, and converse with the boy's maid when she came into his room with his diet. He learnt some rather astounding facts from her that he had had no idea of before—such, for instance, as that a hill which was

visible in the distance over the chimney tops from his window, was in Shropshire; leastways she'd heard it was a long way off somewhere. From staying out also, he had a most interesting lesson in the art of lighting gas with the least possible trouble. The boy's maid used to go into the gas kitchen, and turn on all the taps, and then go to the gas-jet at the other end of the passage, set fire to a piece of paper, and return to light up the kitchen. About half way along the passage the paper would go out, and she had to go and relight it. All this time the gas in the kitchen would be rushing out, so that when she entered the whole thing lit up at once with a bang, saving her all the trouble of applying the light to the jets one by one. Meath thought the plan worthy of a medal for ingenuity in labour-saving contrivances. The only disadvantage of it seemed to be that probably the boy's maid would find herself lying somewhere about the following Wednesday with the house on the top of her.

But after the second day, Meath had companions in his imprisonment. Furneaux had got tired of the half, so thought if he could only manage to get the infection it would afford him a glorious opportunity of going home. He got into two or three rows for going into rooms where measles were going on, and directly he saw anybody looking as he said "anything like measles" he immediately attached himself to him and made a point of associating with him whenever he could. He stayed out on purpose to catch measles. He had found that the symptoms were a headache and cold, so he came to Meath and requested him to clout him as hard as he could on the side of the head to give him the one, and then he went and dipped his head in cold water, taking care not to dry it, and sat afterwards in a thorough draught in order to catch the other. This plan, however, of making the measles come had no effect, and though he was at first confident that it would, and came into Meath's room next morning very triumphant at having detected a small

pimple on his countenance which he was sure was "a measle," he was at last obliged to acknowledge that he was afraid it wouldn't do, and so he went in again. Then two other fellows stayed out with Meath, Battock, and another, Braddilaw, a fellow somewhere in lower division, whom he didn't often have occasion to be with, but with whom he was more thrown together in misfortune. That's an odd sort of thing, that etiquette. You may know a fellow in the house, but it isn't the thing to recognize him in the street. I don't expect Bigtown, who is captain of the eleven, to know me up town, any more than Snooks who was my fag last half, and is now just got into lower division, expects me to know him. Yet I suppose the time may come when we shall all be as good as one another; maybe Snooks, who I know has a tremendously rich set of people, will be riding along in his carriage, while I and Bigtown are trotting along arm-in-arm to our office. But I'm getting off my point. Braddilaw had got his health into such a perfect state of control that he could have anything he chose, and he had already invented one or two special diseases on purpose for himself. He possessed a homœopathic book that he used to get hard names out of, and he would take one symptom out of one disorder and another out of another and then put one of the Latin names of the remedies to them, and ask his dame if he might stay out for Bryonia Arnicata accompanied by a slight tendency to Spongia on the chest. And the odd thing was, said Meath, that it wasn't as if he was shamming, because he really did get bad; or if he didn't, he certainly managed to make himself appear so to his dame and the doctor in a most wonderful way.

As for Battock, he was a hugely-built fellow, and, when he chose to exert himself, could be as strong as an ox; and yet he was always dilating on how delicately constituted he was, not only to the authorities, but to his tutor's fellows. He had a chest like a bull and lungs to correspond, and he would

have them believe that he was rapidly perishing of consumption. If he caught a little cold he immediately settled it in his mind that it was all up with him and that he was going to die: while he would go a mile out of his way, or two, if possible, Meath declared, to avoid getting his feet wet. He always kept his room at a temperature of about eighty in the shade, and carefully excluded all fresh air, so as to save all possibility of draughts.

In Battock's room there was a barometer in which he placed unlimited faith, and which he was reported to consult every morning previous to deciding whether he would stay out or not. The barometer was always getting out of order, Meath believed because the owner was always knocking at it, yet he placed entire confidence in it all the same, and regulated his whole manner of life by it. If the sun was blazing outside, and the birds were singing, and there wasn't a cloud in the sky, it didn't matter to him; if his barometer said Rain, as it very frequently did with no foundation whatever, he either went to his dame and asked to stay out, or if he went out at all it was only when fully equipped for the expected downpour. And it was just the same the other way. One day, a little time before Meath had begun to stay out, something went wrong with the interior arrangements of the instrument while the boys' maid was dusting it,—Meath was in the room at the time, so he could vouch for the statement—and the hand which had been sticking at Rain and Wind for some time, and seemingly right for once, suddenly gave a click and went right round with the head pointing perpendicularly downwards. When Battock came in to get ready for school he looked at his barometer, and wasn't sure whether he ought to consider it as having gone down to its lowest or up to its highest, and asked Meath's opinion on the subject. Meath replied that if he was determined to act on what the barometer told him, it decidedly prophesied fine weather, as he had himself seen

it go towards the right, but he also remarked that it was looking very black overhead, and that he, for his part, was going to provide himself with an umbrella, and he advised him to do the same. Battock, however, didn't put so much trust in his predictions as in those of his invaluable barometer, and accordingly set off to school totally unprepared against anything in the shape of rain.

After school Meath met Battock in the street, and they went down town together. Just as they got to Barnes' Pool Bridge, down came the rain in cats and dogs, and as Meath's umbrella suddenly took it into its knob to be afflicted with a paralytic stroke, and utterly refused to go up with the alacrity that it should have shown at such an hour of need, Battock and he were both rather wet by the time they got it over their heads. Although it was for Battock's benefit that they were going down town, nothing would induce him to proceed; he insisted on returning home to dry himself at the fire, and as Meath had no particular object for furthering the walk, they turned back.

It was probably from that, though Meath says that Battock, who was always complaining of the unhealthiness of, and the danger incurred in, going about his tutor's passages, declared that it was all owing to his having got some water on his head when passing along the lower passage without an umbrella, while the charwoman was scrubbing the upper one, but at any rate the next evening,—the first that Meath stayed out—while Battock was sitting in his room, he gave a decided sniff, followed by a sneeze, and he felt that the cold had come over him, and that he must take immediate measures to stop it, or he would be in for consumption. He immediately rushed to his room, got out his camphor-bottle, and, returning to Meath, administered himself such a dose that he went hopping around the room under its effect for the next five minutes. Besides this, before he went to bed, he borrowed a bottle of nitre from his dame, out of which he

mixed and drank such a powerful decoction of hot spirits and water that Meath began to have fears that he would endeavour to go to bed in his boots. Then he got into bed, and right under the clothes, whence he informed the boys' maid when she came to fetch his candle, that she was on no account to call him next morning, as he was very ill, and was going to stay out.

But, probably owing to all this coddling, next morning the cold had set in with full violence, and Battock's alarm was something pitiful to behold. He was at his wits' end how to get rid of it; he told the other fellows it was no laughing matter; and he said that he didn't wish to be rude, but really they—when they had come in to sympathize—had better go, as he didn't wish any infection that there might be to spread. Meath really believed that he was more than half inclined to take Stortford's advice as to the testamentary disposal of his effects. Meanwhile he devised every sort of plan to get rid of his cold before it developed into anything worse. He despatched detachments of lower boys round the house for all the works upon health that they could lay hands upon, and then he took notes of all their contents and jumbled the remedies up in a manner calculated, Meath would have thought, to have brought on fifty or more undiscovered ailments, only luckily he hadn't got all the ingredients. What ingredients he had he made such plentiful use of that his interior must have been in a state somewhat resembling that of a capsized medicine-chest. He refused to see any doctor, because he had no faith in doctors, he said. When he went to bed he put his feet into hot water, and kept a mustard-leaf on for five-and-twenty minutes, bearing the pain all the time with the unflinchingness of a Christian martyr.

The next day his cold was as bad as ever, and, to add to his misfortunes, a toothache had come on. He seemed to look upon this as a sign that all was over, and inward decay, or another form of consumption, had set in. But

when he had been assured at least eighteen times that it was not likely, he took heart, and bravely continued his contest with the cold. The day before had been devoted to allopathy; this day he gave up to homœopathy, and consumed enormous quantities of camphor and aconite till he declared that he felt as if a guinea-pig and a whole litter of young ones had been turned loose inside him; but in the evening his cold was still no better.

Next day he began to consult everybody as to whether they knew of any epidemic (remedy?) for a cold, and advice came in by the ton. Some fellows recommended filling his mouth with cold water and sitting on the hob till it boiled; others peppering himself, and so sneezing the cold away all at once; some said the best thing was to put the feet in hot water and the head in cold, while others maintained that it ought to be the feet in cold water and the head in hot; but it didn't matter to Battock, he was ready to try them all. And Meath believed that he did try them all in turn; at least he knew that he and Braddilaw spent an entire day in the company of medicine bottles and hot kettles, and two or three times, when he went into the room, Braddilaw warned him, through a cloud of steam—for the atmosphere of Battock's room was beginning by this time to get rather foggy—to hold on to something, as Battock was going to sneeze, which warning was generally followed by a report like a young pistol shot. This, Braddilaw informed him, was part of the treatment.

On the fourth day after Battock's ailments commenced, he was still struggling manfully with them. He received sympathy from nearly every one, even the charwoman, who seemed to find the close atmosphere of his room to her liking, and spent whole periods of twenty minutes in there, enlarging on the fact that "a cold is a most troublesome thing, sir," "as if I didn't know that before," said poor Battock, whose temper was beginning to get rather so-so.

The boys' maid on the other hand was not one of the sympathizers, and nothing irritated Battock so much as to hear her give it as her opinion that she "didn't believe it was nothing but all stumatch, brought on by them things in tins."

Meath had promised to go up with Battock next day, when he went to the dentist, to help him to have his tooth out. He was rather sorry he had done so afterwards, as Stortford, who had been up the time before, informed him that the scene at the execution had been a most awful one, Battock having to be dragged out from under the sofa by one leg, and held forcibly in his chair while the pincers were being put in.

Meath was determined not to stay out longer than he could possibly help. He soon got sick of it. The only advantage of it was that he got a temporary relief from Pevensey; and as it was, he was working hard to stay out all this time. He went to his dame with his pocket-handkerchief full of holes, and Meath believes, tried to persuade her they were the effect of his sneezing and blowing his nose. But she had got tired of him and wouldn't let him. But he received what he called a "severe contusion in the optic" playing at fives, and he was going to try with that as an excuse. Like the man and woman in the old-fashioned weather ornaments, when he came in, it was high time for Meath to be going out again.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MESSING.

WHEN Stortford and Meath instituted their mess, they agreed that it was going to be the very first thing of its kind, none of your ordinary messes, just a combination of fellows to feed together—oh, no; it was going to be something on a much

grander scale—in fact, their mess-table was to be conducted in every way, behaviour, eatables, and everything, just as things are usually conducted at the breakfast-table at home.

Now, of course Meath had no authority for making any statement about the system of behaviour in the Stortford family, and he would not wish to make any reflections on their manners, but still, he said, when he agreed to behave as they did at home, he meant in the way that he judged was the case in most homes from observation of what took place in his own; and he knew for certain that when he happened by chance to come down late for the morning meal at his paternal mansion, an event which he could not say was altogether of rare occurrence, he didn't as a rule find that the rest of the party had devoured all the victuals, and all he got for making some slight complaint was to be told that first come were first served. It might be so with Stortford, but he made the agreement thinking of his own home, and when he made an agreement he expected the other party to stick to it—but it happened not only once, but several times, that he came in late from school and found the tea cold and very little to eat. Still, they say we shall never have perfection in this world, and Meath supposed it must be the case, not even in their mess, though goodness knows what they hadn't resolved about it. And Stortford was such a hindrance to all the grand plans himself; Meath believed he would really have liked their mess to relapse into the ordinary type of Eton mess. In fact, at an early period he gave up trying to raise it to a higher standard of things, and abandoned all the housekeeping to Meath. When he did occasionally rouse himself and interfere, he only made matters worse.

Meath's housekeeping difficulties were numerous. To begin with, there were the fags; his fag and Stortford's fag. Now his fag was a very good fag; his eagle eye had detected something in him that told him he was a superior sort of article, and so he had chosen him, and had not been disap-

pointed in him. He congratulated himself on having got a great treasure in this fag; he was a thoroughly good one, with a great regard for his master's interests. In fact if anything, he sometimes went rather too far in that, for being used to having his own knife and fork bagged by other needy lower boys, he used to take it for granted that the same purloiners might have the audacity to make a raid on Meath's, and so would conceal his feeding utensils in all manner of out-of-the-way places, and then forget where they were. Once, for instance, after a long search, they were found distributed among the boots at the top of Meath's bed, one in each. To be sure that sort of thing was a little awkward at times, but it was a fault on the right side, and at any rate it was a striking proof of ingenuity. It was not every fag that would think of concealing a knife in a boot.

Then he was of such a truthful disposition. Why, once when he opened the door and fell over the edge of Meath's oil-cloth, that every one who didn't remember was in the habit of stumbling over, and broke three plates that he had been warming, he didn't even attempt any excuse. To be sure, Meath and Stortford were in the room and could have quashed any excuse by the mere evidence of their eyes, but it was not every fag that wouldn't have attempted one—that "it wasn't him" or something of that sort.

And he could be trusted to make tea, and he had conscientious scruples about putting the toast on to the top of the fire to make it do quicker; also he could cook very well. They would have got on very well with him alone, Meath was sure, but then there was the other fag, and he spoilt it all.

Stortford's fag, Meath said, was an embodiment of all that was bad. He was enough to demoralize any ordinary fag that he came in contact with. It was a striking proof of Meath's fag's powers of resisting temptation, that he hadn't been corrupted long ago. Stortford's fag had no conscientious scruples whatever. He required constant watch-

ing, or one would never know what one was going to put into one's mouth next. He could make toast *quicker*—Meath would say that for him—than any fag he ever knew; but then with all one's experiences of what one did when oneself was a fag, did one always like toast made so quick? It was all very well when it was in the room, and one could make certain that the rapidity of its manufacture was really owing to the goodness of the fire; but when a fag made a point of always thinking in the most guileless manner that he knew where there was a better fire than your own, and so got an excuse for taking the toast out of the room, why then—?

It was the same with the tea. Now Meath's own fag very often would not be able to get a hot kettle from the kitchen, and so they had to wait for their tea, but when it came, there it was—tea. But to Stortford's fag it made no difference whether he came out of school early or late, he carried off the tea-pot, and *he* never seemed to be at a loss for a kettle, and they were not kept waiting, but then, was the result always tea? And if they should happen to rebuke him because the tea-leaves came out and floated about in the cup, he would say in the most innocent manner that he supposed he hadn't put enough tea in to make it strong, and next time he would put in about half their weekly order, taking care this time to get really boiling water, and the result would be a mixture strong enough to blow one's head off—the sort of stuff a spoon would stand upright in. Then if chidden, he would affect the most profound ignorance as to culinary matters, under which he hid all manner of iniquities, and would express gratitude for being shown the right way, and promise that it shouldn't occur again.

There being two in the mess, of course it was necessary for their dignity to have two fags, and Stortford would insist upon their both coming morning and evening. At least it was owing to him that they did come; because Meath had found that there was so little for them to do that he thought

it would be better for one to come in the morning and the other in the afternoon. But after a time, when he found that though Stortford had agreed to resign all the housekeeping matters into his hands, yet he rather resented his having absolute control over his fag, and even sometimes took to backing him on against him, then what could be done? Meath had to have his own fag back too; and the result was that very often when there was no cooking to be done their services were limited to making the tea or putting the salt on the table, and that brought danger of their becoming idle and so insubordinate. Indeed, it was with a fear of this happening that Meath very often sat down to devise tasks for them; he left his books about in the library so that the fags might have to go down and fetch them; he lent his umbrella to fellows out of the house and said he would send a fag to fetch it; but it was very odd, he found,—when the fags appeared, he invariably forgot all these tasks, and would tell them they might go, without thinking. He talked of taking to write them down in a book.

Besides this, the fags quarrelled so between themselves. It wasn't that Meath's fag was of a quarrelsome nature; on the contrary, he was rather inclined to be too peaceable. Perhaps it ought to be called dispute rather than quarrel, for it was chiefly argument—though when Stortford's fag got the worst of it, he very often would begin to try to convince Meath's fag by blows. The fact was, that both of them were great politicians; at least Meath's was, and he supposed Stortford's pretended he was because he had a vague sort of idea that perhaps he might impose upon Meath somehow through this means; and the consequence of this was that they used to have long political arguments during fagging time. Meath's fag was a staunch Conservative, while Stortford's was, or at any rate pretended to be, an equally strong Liberal, though Meath believes he only did it out of spite to him, and their disputes would wax very hot sometimes.

Now this was all very well; Meath and Stortford liked to listen to them and to reflect that they had got a superior quality of fag, and that it was not every one's fags that could talk politics like them, and all that sort of thing; and it was very nice for Meath to hear his fag beat Stortford's fag's head off in argument, and prove to him up and down and all round that if every one did not hold his views, ruin would threaten the country; but it was not equally nice, and Meath and Stortford did not like it so much, when, on the latter's fag finding himself compelled in the heat of dispute to resort to violence, if not restrained by higher powers, ruin threatened their eggs.

But the fags were not the only trouble that Meath had to put up with. The cooking department, that had been going to be conducted on such a grand scale, didn't turn out nearly as successful as they had hoped. When they started their mess, Stortford brought an enormous cookery-book, which he said he had found kicking about at home,—Meath thought it was very probably the family cookery-book,—and which he said might turn out useful. They weren't going to content themselves any longer with plain eggs, or bacon, or eggs and bacon, or sausages, such as the vulgar herd delighted in. No, they were going in for a much higher type of cookery than that—the sort of kickshaws and things one gets at home, and so they wanted something of this sort of cookery-book. But then they found that though their ideas of grand cooking soared high, the cookery-book's ideas soared a great deal higher still. Meath didn't know what sort of establishments the party that compiled that cookery-book had been used to, but the calm way in which he used to order them about in some of his receipts—"Take three dozen eggs and a pint of best cooking sherry, &c."—that was for one of the minor dishes, by the way, if Meath remembered right—used to take away their breath to read it. Why didn't he say, "Take a gross of eggs and a bucket-and-

a-half of champagne," while he was about it? They soon found that unless they wished to ruin themselves by the most lavish expenditure, they must give up all thoughts of acting by this cookery-book.

Then they went to the other extreme, and tried a penny cookery book. But that soon disgusted them. It was evidently designed by one who had a very low opinion of his fellow-creatures. To suppose that they didn't know that the ingredients for boiled beef were, "Beef and hot water," was, Meath thought, treating them rather too much as if they were idiots, and Stortford and he objected to being treated as idiots, so they gave up this cookery book too. And so they waited till they could find one that would suit them, contenting themselves meanwhile with the old bill of fare.

But it wasn't only the cooking, it was the provisions themselves that they were always getting into difficulties about. The management of the commissariat was the only part of the mess that Stortford wouldn't even nominally resign to Meath, which, of course, accounted for the mishaps. They took week and week about to order things. Stortford would order the most ridiculous things. He tried all manner of experiments, regardless of expense. He always invested the mess money in the last new nastiness in tins, and he didn't make it go nearly half so far as Meath did. Once, for instance, he went and spent five-and-sixpence in an enormous pyramid of Colorado ham, done up in a tin, which took a whole evening to extract with the aid of a poker and shovel, and then was as salt as—as anything one liked to imagine, Meath said. There was about ten pounds of it, all squashed into this pyramid, with all the bone taken out, and Stortford tried to prove that it was economical, because it would last longer than five and a half shilling tins of other things—just as if one could go on existing on Colorado ham for three weeks at a time. Of course they got tired of it after the first three or four days, and began to wish they had finished

it. Indeed, they were rather pleased than otherwise, to find, on their fag's bringing it from the boys' maid's cupboard, that some one else had apparently a liking for Colorado ham, and commenced operations on the other end. They used to give it to needy neighbours all round, and thereby made more enemies in a week than in all the rest of their Eton life put together. That ham was the most satiating Meath ever knew; they used to invite a fellow to have a slice, and give him a small wedge, and he would go away grumbling at their stinginess; then, in about half an hour, he would return, with his waistcoat unbuttoned, and puff out abuse at their having ruined his digestion. Fellows never came a second time, and they got disgusted with the very sight of the Colorado ham, so they abandoned it to the tender mercies of the mystic cat that keeps the key of the boys' maid's cupboard. Stortford used to grumble at Meath for behaving in just the contrary way. He said that he didn't go in enough for generous food—Meath didn't know if he looked upon Colorado ham as generous food, generous as far as giving it away was concerned. The fact was, Meath restricted him to what was good for him, and few people like that. Stortford objected to make an eighteen-penny pot of marmalade last more than three meals; and he objected also to anything that they could cook for themselves. To be sure, Meath agreed with him sometimes, that if they had tried to eat their eggs at seven instead of six they might not have been able to; but then, what could be expected at Eton, where the poultry is noted for its age? But Stortford was so fastidious, and had such a feeble appetite; it always seemed to require stimulating by something entirely new. Why, he even turned up his nose at a nice beefsteak pie that was sent Meath from home, and that had had the bottom of the dish mixed up with it on the journey.

As for keeping their table nice and tidy, "just like the

breakfast-table at home," that was impossible with Pevensey in the house. He would persist in coming in to gossip while they were at tea, and in clearing a place for himself to sit down among their tea-service. They had started a brand-new tea-service when they began, and had expended a great deal of thought over the transaction. They wanted something entirely out of the common, so that every one would know that their tea-service was their own, and not the common house property. They had had great difficulty in deciding what pattern they would have. First they had thought of getting "A present from Eton," then they thought that "A present for a good boy" would suit their virtuous tendencies, and then Stortford was very much taken with some magnificent views of Eton and Windsor; but, finally, they had decided on a neat little pattern of scarlet butterflies, fluttering around some red and green sea anemonies, with a pink stripe at the top. But they might just as well have saved themselves all this trouble. Pevensey used to come in and sit on the table, and more often than not he sat on the leaf; then, as a natural consequence, up would go the other side of the table, and down came the tea-service. The regulation that they had made was, that whoever broke anything was to supply it; but Pevensey argued that he didn't belong to the mess, so the rule didn't apply. However, he was going to make it good "some day." Meath would have liked to have made a list of all the things Pevensey was going to make good "some day." There was soon none of the original tea-service left, and by the middle of the half they had had about three sets of the common property cups and saucers. And yet their mess was going to be the most orderly in the house.

It was out of the question to keep a clean table-cloth. Stortford could never help himself to anything without presenting a large share of it to the table-cloth. He used to lean right across the table, and try to balance a fried egg

back to his plate on the edge of a knife. The usual result may be imagined. Besides, he had presented the mess with a set of cruets, none of which could be persuaded, with all the accurate balancing in the world, to stand upright; directly anybody stirred, down they all would tumble, and there were three great stains on the table-cloth. And last, but by no means least, there was Pevensey—Pevensey, who would bring in a cup of tea to drink in their room, and who could not be brought to understand that if the said cup was held horizontally it was unreasonable to suppose that the contents would remain in it.

Oh, no! it was no go, Meath saw. At any rate, their mess was no worse than most others, he supposed. If they didn't pay any attention to it, perhaps they wouldn't notice it. Meath had thought of being a bachelor; but, if all housekeeping was like this, he had serious thoughts about marrying.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW THE DEBATING SOCIETY GOT ON.

THE last meeting but one of the Society came. The half was drawing to a close. The last meeting was to be given up to the transaction of private business, and all sorts of improvements were going to be discussed. There was to be some secret voting, and some more members to be elected, as if the place wasn't stuffy enough already, some of the old ones said; and then there was a vote of thanks to be passed to Pevensey on his leaving, and they had to elect a new, or at any rate re-elect the old, President and Secretary; so that altogether there was a great deal to be done, and there would be no time for a debate. Pevensey had a handsome piece of plate in the shape of an old piece of blue china which he had hung up on his wall, and which had fallen down, and then he had mended it up with some Diamond Cement; he

proposed to present this as a testimonial to the President.

Every one had come to the same conclusion as Meath at this last meeting but one, that the manner of conducting affairs was a great deal too formal, and that what was wanted was more real debate; and there had been a great deal of talking over the subject in rooms, and a sort of unanimous consent that something should be done to improve the system. Mardon took great part in these discussions. Mardon was canvassing right and left to get in, and when he got in, he was going to put them all to rights, and show them what was the proper way to do the thing. He said he was a rattler at argument. If so, all the better, Meath said; but *his* experience of Mardon's argument was that when he found the other fellow differ from him he usually settled the dispute by saying, "Very well, you shall be licked for that," which was hardly the sort of thing they wanted in the Debating Society.

As already said, there had long been a general feeling of dissatisfaction about the Society. Even the book, which at first did keep up some pretence of the affair being to improve the mind, had become nothing but a collection of rubbish. Fellows stuck down whatever first came into their heads, and then passed it on to the next. The last debate before this had occupied just four pages altogether. The only parts worth reading were the introductory remarks to each speech, which were written by the member who had just finished writing his speech, or rather his momentary thoughts, and then would put "Mr. So-and-so was the next to address the house in a most fluent, ready, and brilliant speech;" then he would hand the book on to Mr. So-and-so, who being in a hurry, would condense his "fluent, ready, and brilliant speech" into four lines or so, write another introduction of the same tenour to Mr. Thingummy's speech, and so on.

But on this night, they had all come to a sort of tacit agreement that they would make an effort to improve matters.

They were not going to content themselves with merely stating their views, but when everybody had done so, they were going to get up and either fight for their own, or cry down anybody else's that they didn't like. And they weren't going to waste time by speaking if they didn't know anything about the matter; nor were they to repeat other people's arguments. Altogether everything was to be amended, and they met in the Library after prayers on that Saturday night, prepared to do great things, each with his pencil to note down anything that he might want to get up and speak about in the after-debate. They didn't talk as much as usual before the President and Secretary came in, but they looked at each other and thought the more. It was the calm coming before the storm.

When the President and Secretary had arrived with all the paraphernalia, the rest took their seats and a debate began at once between Furneaux and Clowborough, because Clowborough declared that Furneaux had got his chair. This, however, was settled by Furneaux proving the identity of his chair, which he declared he knew because the varnish had been taken off by some one warming himself at the fire and then sitting down hot upon it, so this being decided, the proceedings of the night commenced.

It was Pevensey's turn to open the debate. He had been troubling Meath for some time before to help him to do his speech, but Meath had only suggested a subject to him, and utterly refused to help him any more in his idleness. He had told him to put up Capital Punishment as a debate, and left him to work out the subject for himself. He stood up and began.

Mr. Pevensey's speech lasted exactly three minutes and a half. He said that he hadn't had much time to look up the subject, so he hoped they would excuse any imperfections in his speech, and after consuming two minutes and a half in apology, he went on to touch lightly on his subject, that being

only a secondary consideration. He was not of opinion that Capital Punishment was a good thing, because he thought no punishment was a good thing; he was sure that all things should be ruled by kindness, as he knew that if people tried on kindness with him, it always paid better. (Laughter and applause.) Therefore as he didn't approve of any punishment, he was decidedly against Capital Punishment, and he hoped he had succeeded in showing them that Capital Punishment was not desirable. That was all he said, and then he sat down, and Mr. Stortford got up to oppose or "second"—they hadn't settled that point yet.

Mr. Stortford disagreed with Mr. Pevensey in thinking Capital Punishment a bad thing. He thought if a man committed a crime he ought to be hanged, as, if he were allowed to live, he might do it again. And as for what had been said about ruling by kindness, it was all very well, but a great many people couldn't be ruled by kindness. He thought a great many little boys, for instance, in the lower parts of the school wouldn't be half so good as they were if it wasn't for fear of being swished, and so he approved of Capital Punishment.

Mr. Linwood then rose and gave his views on Punishment in general. He always went in for the highly ideal state of perfection in everything, and so now he said he hoped he should see the day when human nature should have become so good that no punishment would be required. Punishment was an awful thing. What business had we to punish our fellow-creatures when we might be just as bad ourselves? Oh no, he thought that the sooner the blood-thirsty, revengeful, and retributive (here he got rather excited,) form of justice was amended and every one lived in a manner that no punishment should be required, the better.

Meath had thought that the debate had been going to be about the abolition of Capital Punishment or not, and the substitution of something else for it, and he believed it had

been, but the other fellows seemed to be gradually drifting off the point, and getting on to the subject of whether men would ever be good enough to go without punishment at all. So he thought he would try and get them back to the right track again, and as he had got his speech ready with this drift, he up and made it :—

"Mr. President and Gentlemen," he said, "Sir Walter Scott has said—at least I think it was he—but I saw it quoted in the paper yesterday evening" (here he began to lose his head as usual), "when I was down here reading it in the Library; well, as I was saying, I saw a quotation about a man who was going to be thrown by somebody else into a lake, and it struck me that it was—you know, the quotation was made in an article on the very subject that we're debating about—well, I thought it was—that is, it would be very appropriate to say it to show what I think. It put something of this sort; you know the man was going to be killed; well, it said that he begged and prayed to be put into the lowest cave or recess of the earth, only he wanted life. Now I think that this just shows that"—(then he began to consider what it did show, and tried to remember what the paper had said)—"that—that a man who is afraid of death is a coward and will cling to life"—(here he took heart again)—"and a coward is the only man who will commit a murder: some one has said so, I forget who, but I know I have seen it in a book somewhere, and death is the only thing that will deter a coward, therefore," (he finished up in a joyful tone because he felt he had proved his argument like a proposition of Euclid) "therefore, death is the only thing to deter a murderer." He thought of crying "Q. E. D!" at the end, he said afterwards, he was so happy to have got it over, but he refrained, and sat down to get cool.

The President then got up. They were breaking out of the absurd system of always speaking in the same order. The President was of the same opinion as Meath, that to

give a man a chance of life was to take away half the terrors that would present themselves to him when weighing the chances of his being found out or not. A man that was shut up in prison always had hopes of getting out, either by good conduct or otherwise, and though of course he thought the less life there was taken the better, yet he was afraid Capital Punishment could not well be abolished.

Mr. Vernant then gave them a few statistics. He gave an exact return of how many people had been hanged in the last few years, and how many fewer cases of forgery and sheep-stealing had occurred since Capital Punishment had been abolished for those offences. Therefore he seemed to think that if there was no Capital Punishment there would be no murder (as if people committed murder in order to find out what Capital Punishment was like). Therefore his views were against Capital Punishment.

After that Mr. Dawtrey spoke. It was an excellent opportunity for his usual moral lecture on the general depravity of human nature, so he gave it all, nearly word for word the same as he had before given when debating about the desirability of the Corn-laws, or the admirability of the Shah. When he had finished his lecture he sat down.

Mr. Clowborough then proceeded to—hem—divide his arguments into three heads. Hem—the first thing to be considered was, if punishment could be done without—the second—hem—was if it couldn't—and the third was—hem—if we abolished Capital Punishment what were we to have instead? The first two questions—hem—he would dispose of shortly, and at once—hem. He was fully of Mr.—hem—Pevensey's opinion that if a person couldn't be ruled by kindness it was—hem—no punishment that could—hem—restrain him. Look at half the bad fellows—hem—or he wouldn't call them bad; but look at the idle fellows in the school—hem: weren't they the fellows who were always getting swished? while—hem—the good fellows didn't?

Wasn't that a proof of his argument? Finally—hem—for his third head, about what could be done were punishment abolished—he meant—hem—Capital Punishment—if the people were transported they escaped into the bush—hem—in Australia, and committed more crimes, so he didn't see what was to be done with them—hem. (Here he found himself in rather a hole as at the beginning he had wanted to prove that he didn't want people to be hanged, and now he seemed to have left nothing else to be done with them). So he thought, on the whole—hem—(as a last resource) he would go behind the chair.

Mr. Furneaux then let the Society off rather easier than usual, and only criticized Mr. Clowborough's arguments as "exceedingly absurd." Any one who knew anything knew that people weren't transported now, and that shutting up in a convict prison was very much worse than death. So what Mr. Clowborough could be fool enough to have been thinking about he didn't know.

The debate was beginning to look just a little stormy. It was getting a trifle personal. This was a proof of what Meath had always upheld, that they oughtn't to mention names if they professed to be an imitation of the House of Commons—they ought to address each other as the "honourable gentleman from number eight," or whatever the number of their rooms might be.

Mr. Clowborough got up to defend himself. If he had been wise he would have grasped the help offered him by Furneaux, and used it to support his theory that Capital Punishment could be abolished, and the murderer could be shut up and ruled by kindness, or something of that sort; but he was always so obstinate, Meath said, and to contradict him, even if one was in the right, was like showing a red handkerchief to a bull, it only excited him the more. So he got up, and said that Mr. Furneaux was quite wrong; he had occasion to know, as he had gone deeply into the

matter, he always said this, by the way, in any discussion—Meath knew very few matters that he had not had occasion to go deeply into—well, he had occasion to know that transportation had not been abolished, and that a great many people had escaped.

This display of ignorance was too much, and three of the other members felt themselves called upon to rise simultaneously to contradict it, Meath, Linwood, and Furneaux. They were all so polite that they each wished to give way to the other, and kept bobbing up and down, uncertain whether to speak or not for some little time. At last the President called upon Meath as senior member of the three, and he gave it strong against Clowborough's foolishness amidst the unanimous applause of the house, who would have been all ready to do the same. As for Clowborough, he looked daggers at Meath.

Mr. Sortell was now the only one who hadn't spoken, and the President asked him if he didn't intend to. Mr. Sortell, who had been diligently taking notes on his shirt cuff throughout the proceedings, perhaps with a view to the edification of his washerwoman, then stood up and said that he could not say much on the subject of Capital Punishment for or against; but there were one or two things that former speakers had mentioned that he wished to make some remarks about. Then he hauled down his shirt cuff and began: One of the members—he thought it was Mr. Meath—

Meath denied having done anything of the sort, and the President called him to order, saying he must wait till Mr. Sortell had done.

Well, Mr. Sortell went on, if it wasn't Mr. Meath, he supposed it must have been Mr. Pevensey who had mentioned about sheep-stealing—Mr. Pevensey here exhibited a desire to get up and contradict Mr. Sortell, but the President motioned to him to remain seated; so Mr. Sortell went on—about sheep-stealing, that since hanging for it had been

abolished it had decreased. Now that was only a coincidence, but it was absurd to suppose that hanging was the cause of sheep-stealing. He would leave them to draw their own conclusions. And then there was something else he wanted to say—here he tried to decipher something on his cuff for some time—oh! it was about punishment. He thought it was rather odd Mr. Clowborough advocating the abolition of punishment, considering that he himself was a striking example of the efficacy of punishment. He had got some more to say, but—here the notes evidently became unreadable—well, he wouldn't trouble the house any longer.

Then Mr. Pevensey and Mr. Clowborough both rose in wrath, and, after bobbing up and down till they were beginning both to get tired and ridiculous, Mr. Clowborough finally gave way to Mr. Pevensey. The latter demanded what authority Mr. Sortell had for saying that he had said anything about sheep-stealing. He should just like him to prove that statement. Then perhaps he thought he had not said enough in his opening speech, for he felt it his duty to repeat all his statements about mercy being the way to rule people, and not punishment. No punishment would ever rule him, he was sure, nothing but gentleness.

Then room was given to Mr. Clowborough to get up and attack Mr. Sortell. He left out all his "hems" this time. What did Mr. Sortell mean by his insinuation? He required an instant explanation, and if Mr. Sortell meant anything— Great cheering and laughter here ensued, and the President got up.

The President said that he thought the debate was getting rather off the point. They had met to discuss "Whether it was desirable that Capital Punishment should be abolished for something else," and he begged that the members would confine their arguments to that subject.

Mr. Sortell got up and begged the President's pardon if he had made the debate wander from the right track, and he

would try not to do so again ; only he thought he must just answer the members who had called upon him to do so, as he didn't wish to disturb their peace of mind by letting them think he meant things that he did not. He was very sorry if he had made a mistake about Mr. Pevensey's sheep-stealing, but he really thought it was him. His notes had got rather confused, he supposed ; but, at any rate, it must have been a very stupid person who did say it—(here Mr. Vernant winced) ; and as for Mr. Clowborough, all he meant to insinuate was that he had once been noted for being so idle, and now he had developed into such a virtuous boy.

Mr. Clowborough tried to rise, but Mr. Vernant was before him. Mr. Vernant did not approve of his opinions being criticized as "stupid," and he begged Mr. Sortell would not say so again.

Mr. Sortell got up, in spite of poor Mr. Clowborough's efforts to get his word in, and said that he had not the slightest intention of retracting his statement. He thought Mr. Vernant's opinion *was* very stupid, and he knew all the other members would agree with him.

Meath here whispered to Stortford that there was going to be a row, and the President saw him in the act and called out to him that if he wanted to say anything he must stand up and say it out loud. Meath said that it had nothing to do with the debate, but every one looked so black at him, and said, "Don't you hear, you must stand up," in such a ferocious manner that he had to get up, and so he said,—

"Mr. President and Gentlemen, what I said was merely that I thought there was going to be a row. I didn't think it was necessary to say it out loud ; but, since you are so particular, there you have it. And as I'm up, I think I may as well say that I don't see what all this has to do with Capital Punishment. Those are my sentiments."

Then he resumed his seat. He thought that this address might have had the effect of recalling the other members to

a remembrance of what the debate was originally about, and so he said what he did say. The President then supported Meath by again reminding the society what they had met to discuss, and said that he thought if no member had anything more to the point to say, the house had better adjourn.

This ought to have put things straight. Vernant, it is true, did not care to carry on the argument any further; but poor Clowborough had been chafing all this time under a sense of his insults, and he now jumped up in a hurry and said that before the house adjourned he just had one word to say. It was not exactly to the point, perhaps, but still he thought it ought to be said. Mr. Sortell had chosen to quote him as an instance of one who had been converted by punishment, and he wished to know what Mr. Sortell meant by making the assertion that it had been so. He had not been converted by punishment. It was a sense of his having done wrong that had caused him to repent. He did not know either that he had ever been so bad as Mr. Sortell seemed to want to make out, and he felt very much hurt by what had been said.

Everybody laughed, and the President had to call the house to order again. Then Meath happened to blow his nose, and, when he had done so, some evil genius put it into his head to remark in a low voice to Linwood what an uncomfortable thing it was to blow one's nose with a new pocket-handkerchief when one had a cold. But the President's eye was upon him, and he rebuked him for the second time for speaking without getting up. This irritated Meath, so he rose and spoke his feelings,—

"Mr. President and Gentlemen, I think this sort of thing is getting very absurd. This is the second time in the course of the evening that I've been compelled to stand up to make some remark utterly irrelevant to the subject of the debate. Just to show you the absurdity of the thing I will repeat what I said to Mr. Linwood. I said, didn't he think

that a new pocket-hankerchief was like a newspaper? There you have it. I should say that if this sort of thing is going on, the sooner we adjourn the better. It's half-past ten now."

The President then replied that although it was not for Meath to adjourn the house, yet he thought it was nearly time. So unless any member had anything really relevant to the matter to say, the house would now adjourn.

Mr. Linwood got up and said he agreed with the President. Before adjourning he wished to make an appeal to their feelings on behalf of mercy, and he would say no more.

This was a laudable attempt to return the debate to its right channel, but it didn't succeed. Mr. Dawtrey said that sorry as he was to have to do it, duty compelled him to stand up and launch forth a diatribe against Mr. Clowborough's statement. He (Mr. Dawtrey) remembered the fact distinctly, that two summer-halves ago Mr. Clowborough had come into his room after having just been swished for the seventeenth time that half,—

Mr. Clowborough's feelings here became too much for him, and he sprang up to speak, but the President restrained him. Meath didn't know whether the butler had been listening at the door as he often did, and thought the debate was getting too violent, but at this moment the gas gave two flickers and went out, leaving the Society all in the dark, except for the President's lamp. The President looked at his watch, and signed to Mr. Dawtrey that he had better be quick and finish: so Mr. Dawtrey went on; Mr. Clowborough had come into his room after having been swished for the seventeenth time that half, and had said that he was getting tired of that sort of thing,—

The President interrupted with, "Really, Mr. Dawtrey, I think this is hardly to the point."

Mr. Dawtrey responded, "Oh, but wait, Mr. President, and I think you'll see it is to the point. What Mr. Clowborough said to me was that he was going to turn industrious in

future; and hasn't he been industrious in future? I call that a striking instance of punishment being a good thing to keep people, who are all wicked by nature, from doing wrong."

Mr. Clowborough had by this time become furious. Before the President could stop him he tried to rise again, but Mr. Linwood was before him to help him in his defence. At the same time as the idea struck Linwood it struck most of the Society, and they all rose simultaneously, but finally left it to Linwood to speak. He said he would not contradict Mr. Dawtrey for the world, but if Mr. Dawtrey would consult his dates he thought he would find that during the half he had mentioned he had been away with some illness, and so he must be mistaken in his statement about Mr. Clowborough.

Mr. Dawtrey found himself caught out—Meath believed he had only made the statement because he liked putting his word in everywhere—so he was put to shame. Clowborough ought have been contented with this revenge, but he was not satisfied with others winning it for him, he thought he must do it for himself. So he made a movement, as if about to stand up again. The President interfered—

"Mr. Clowborough, unless you have really anything to say important, it is getting too late to waste any more time."

Mr. Clowborough.—"Mr. President, I think what I have to say is of some importance. It concerns my honour, but I will confine myself to a few words. Mr. Dawtrey had stated that I was swished seventeen times in one half. Now, although it has been proved that Mr. Dawtrey could not know, yet I should not like that sort of thing to get about. I call upon you to deny it and to witness that I have never been swished more than twelve times."

Every one seemed to have taken an accurate account of how many times Clowborough had been swished before his conversion, for every one got on their feet. But before any one could speak the President addressed the house,—

"Gentlemen, as already has been remarked, this is getting absurd. We came here to discuss the Abolition of Capital Punishment, and it has resulted in a debate on how many times Mr. Clowborough has suffered punishment the reverse of capital. This being the case, and it now being ten minutes to eleven, besides our being in the dark, the house will divide. Mr. Vernant, please to turn up the lamp, in order that I may see the show of hands better."

Then they all began to think almost for the first time whether they approved of Capital Punishment. But they were saved further trouble by Vernant turning the wick of the lamp the wrong way, and it's going out with a smell. Then as nobody had any matches, the President was heard to say he thought the show of hands had better be postponed till next morning, and

The house then adjourned.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FINALE.

THEN at last came the last night of the half, and Meath was precious glad it was over. He always thought the last fortnight of any half, he said, was like a train stopping; it seemed to get slower and slower until it stopped altogether.

Yet they were all very busy during the last ten days. There were two or three School Races run off, and the house Athletics and several other house Athletics to go and see. Dawtrey and Clowborough went in for the walking race after all, but they didn't win, so it isn't necessary to state where they came in. Suffice it to say that they were both complimented by the little cads who were there to see, on having been the only two who had walked fairly.

Meath nearly distinguished himself in his tutor's Athletics by coming in first in the three-legged race, one of the "events," as it was called in the entry list, that he had put down his name for. He drew his fag to run with, and if it

hadn't been that they stumbled at the last moment and capsized, they would have won, and he would have had a pewter to adorn his mantelpiece. It was the only event he had any chance of winning. He knew he couldn't do anything else in the way of running. The only prize he ever won in the Athletic line was at his last school for a sack-race, and then it was by rolling.

Then, too, there were Collections to sap for, and Meath expected great things of himself, and he was read out very creditably on the last morning. He was sure all along he deserved to do something; he sapped hard enough for them. He sat in his room poring over his books the whole morning of the last whole-holiday with his hands stuck into his hair in true sap style, looking as wild as was proper, and tried to shut out the noise of the outer world. And that was a work of no slight difficulty. There came a hurdy-gurdy girl outside who wouldn't go away on any consideration, and when he gesticulated at her out of the window and made signs to her to go away, only seemed to think he was applauding her, and went on twice as badly as ever. Then he threw her a penny and that made her worse, but finally a policeman appeared on the scene, and moved her on, much to his gratification. She hadn't been gone long, though, before a muffin-man came and rang his bell persistently up and down in front of the house, while Meath was trying to hammer a saying lesson into his head, but fortunately he happened to irritate Mardon at the same time, who removed him by a timely shot with a lump of coal. In the afternoon Meath went to the School library, which he had found by repeated experience to be a marvellous place for getting through an unlimited amount of work in a limited time, and he got on better there. So all the places that he didn't attain to, he didn't consider as his fault; it was that hurdy-gurdy girl. The master made some remarks about his verses in the sort of half-school, half-absence, that always goes on on the last afternoon. Meath had put notes of exclamation at the end

of each line, increasing the number by one as he finished each verse. He had put them in for effect, and because he thought the sense wanted it, but the master asked him if he did it because he got more and more surprised at being able to do verses as he went along.

Talking of sapping, Meath said next half he would have to sap hard. He complained that they'd been and put on another set of Trials just in time for him. In the good old days one used to get into Upper Division and stay there in happy indolence for the rest of one's days, but now they put on more and more atrocities in the way of examinations and always just in time for him to come in for them. He dared say when he'd got through these next Trials they would invent something else for his torment,—Trials into Sixth form perhaps—they were quite capable of it.

Furneaux and Stortford did a sort of sapping for Collections. They got as far as putting two big lexicons on the table, and making a list of what they had to do, because, they said, it was so nice scratching out the things as they got them done. That might be, but the list still existed on the last night, and there wasn't much of it scratched out, though it was eight days since they said that, and Collections were over, so it was rather late in the day to begin.

Pevensey distinguished himself by his answers in a common sense paper that had been given his division to fill up on odd school. There were two questions; one was, "What do you know of Philippi?" to which Pevensey replied that "Philippi is a marsh, near the railway arches of the G.W.R., near Eton. The Patres Conscripti took a boat and went there." And the other was, "Why does the chapel roof drip?" To which he gave as an answer, "Because there is a hole in it." Both of which answers his master condemned as impertinent, and even was half-inclined to complain of Pevensey for. "As if it was my fault," said Pevensey; "he asked me to tell him all I knew about Philippi so I did, though it was little enough, and as for the roof dripping

because of the fellows' condensed hymns coming down, I don't believe it."

Poor Pevensey received notice a fortnight before the end of the half from his people that they had heard from the masters that he was doing no work at Eton, and was very troublesome, and so was to be taken away. He was terribly put out at first. He said, "I think it's horrid hard luck; if my people want a fellow like me to sap, they shouldn't have sent me to a place like Eton; it's all very well for you, Bunter, I believe you could sap anywhere, but it's different to me; I see fellows doing things, and I must do them too." Poor Pevensey! And it wasn't really as if he wanted the learning so much; he won't have to work for his living, I know; it's the out-of-door discipline he wants; and as for being troublesome, what is a fellow sent to school for but to be made to keep out of mischief?

However, he soon got over his first grief, and then determined that, as he *had* got to leave, he wouldn't do a stroke more work for the rest of the half than was absolutely necessary, just to spite his tutor for having recommended his people to remove him, and then he plunged into a course of enjoyment in order that he might forget his troubles.

He insisted on exercising his privilege of writing a Vale instead of his last weekly composition, and he left Meath the note-book that he did it in as a keepsake. He expended a good deal of labour over this Vale, although he really began it because he probably thought it would take up less time than if he did his proper work.

From the contents of the note-book, which Meath showed me, it seemed that he experienced some difficulty in getting a fair start. There were two or three false ones before it got into the swing. The first began:

"I leave thee, now, fair Eton,
Full sorely it I say,
I'd sooner far be beaten
Than from thee go away."

But he didn't like that; he thought it was too commonplace, Meath said. So he began again,—

"Oh, Eton, mother Eton,
I love thee very much,
At last I leave thee, Eton,
My grief at which is such—"

that he couldn't express it, apparently, for there was another try, this time in a different metre,—

"The time is now approaching, the hour draws on apace,
Which takes from thee, dear Eton, the aspect of my face.
I grieve to have to say it, but still I must, 'tis true—
And—"

Here he stuck.

However, at the fourth start he seemed to have got well away. Probably he had been out airing himself, and had become inspired. His verses required hardly any comment; they speak for themselves, Meath said,—

"Descend, great Muse, from highest peak,
Of great Olympuses (*sic*) Mount,
And shed on me poetic drops
From Helicon's sweet fount."

Classical, to say the least of it.

"I wish to sing of Eton's fame,
I wish my grief to show
At leaving, not in dullest prose,
But in poetic flow."

Then, without further introduction,—

"Full many years I've pass'd with joy
In Eton's fair green bowers,
But now my time is numbered,
Not *in* days, but in hours."

"For cruel fate decrees it such
That I should leave the place,
And never more, as Eton boy,
Again 'twill see my face."

Truly beautiful, commented Meath; but something must have interrupted him here, and then he must have got another scansion into his head, as it went on to quite another style,—

"No more on the river
I'll row my swift boat,
No more of the beagles
I'll hear the sweet note."

Giving one the idea of a beagle sitting on a tree. Another change in the metre,—

"No more in the playing fields
Shall I pursue the ball,
Nor shout upon St. Andrew's Day,
When gazing at the wall."

The facility with which he varied his subjects was worthy of the true poet.—

"No more pursue my studies
Within thy stately halls,
No more attend at absences,
Or, better still, at calls."

It must have been a brilliant stroke of inspiration that suggested that last idea and rhyme.

"I love thee, fair, fair Eton,
My love is very great,
At leaving you now most profound,
Of grief I feel the weight."
"My tears run down my brawny cheeks—"

Here he apparently considered that he had done enough in the-way of reminiscences and lamentation, and that it was time for him to leave off, for the end came rather abruptly,—

"And now I'll say adieu,
Good-bye again, Etona dear,
To you I'll e'er be true."

Evidently having in his mind the end of a letter. Meath suggested that while he was about it he might have done something of this sort :—

"And now I'll say again adieu,
Half wild, I am, with frenzy,
Believe me then, Etona dear,
Yours faithfully, Pevensey."

However, he's left now, so we oughtn't to laugh at the poor fellow any more. The last Meath saw of him was on the last day before going into three o'clock school, because he went

away on Irish leave, and then he was sitting disconsolately on a packing-case of the dimensions of a coffin, surrounded by all the moveables that he was not going to leave for his minor, and waiting for the boys' maid to come and help him to pack, it being then three-quarters of an hour before his train started. However, it is to be presumed that he got away in time, as, when Meath looked into his room on coming out of school, he and the packing-case and all the other luggage had disappeared, and all was desolation. He promised to keep up a constant correspondence with Meath, but he went away without giving him his address, and he forgot to take Meath's. Pevensey all over!

His last break out was in a leaving-tea in his room two nights before he went. He called it a dinner, because there was soup and fish—that is to say, preserved in tins—as well as joints, in the shape of a ham and brawn and sweets. But it was the most comical sort of dinner that Meath had ever seen. He sat in the place of honour beside Pevensey, who made him eat everything regardless of the order they came in. He began with some brawn, then he had some strawberry jam, then Pevensey insisted on his trying a sardine, all on the same plate, and assisted by a bun. After that Pevensey stood over him while he drank a slop basin full of mulligatawney soup, and then he helped him to some apricot jam. Meath had to taste everything because Pevensey, in his hospitality, threatened, if he did not, to draw the attention of the company to a fact that he had discovered, that the day happened to be Meath's birthday, and that he had just attained to "sweet seventeen," in which case he knew that, in the uproarious condition every one was in, he would have been compelled to make a speech, or, what was worse, sing a song; and he couldn't possibly have sung then, he said, as his voice was cracking, and when he tried to sing, it started down somewhere as if he had got on an extra thick pair of boots, and then somewhere about the middle of the performance it flew upwards, and all about doing the

most fearful havoc among the keys in a way that was painful to himself and everybody else. However, by accepting everything, and judiciously arranging it on his plate so that the last thing always appeared to the top, he managed to escape that infliction.

Pevensey left Meath several legacies besides the note-book, and amongst others a cold, which he gave him at the beginning of the half, by watering him one day when he expressed his desire that he could grow a little. Meath had that cold all the half on and off, now up in his head, now down in his chest, and he once succeeded in driving it down into the corner of his right leg, but it rallied and got the better of him, and he supposed he would have it all the holidays. Still it was meant well, he said, he had no doubt, and bore as he was sometimes, he was sorry poor Pevensey was gone.

Meath got all his things packed early and was ready to start first thing in the morning. He settled his bills the day before, and so he was all right in that quarter. His liabilities were not enormous. Two shillings and threepence to the carpenter for putting up some shelves. A shilling for time and material, and one and threepence for wood and work. He couldn't quite understand the system of charging himself.

I went home with him and went to call for him in the fly on the way to the station. Amongst other trifles that he had to take home was a coal-scuttle, that his people had commissioned him to get for them at a carver's up town, and which he had faithfully searched for and procured after much trouble. It was not every Eton fellow that would have dared go home with a coal-scuttle. Meath fought the toll-man for his half-penny at the bridge as we came over, and gained his point. Hopeful, changeable, strange to the last; "If we haven't done all we intended this time," he said, as the train went over the bridge, "why, isn't there next half?"

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